

FINLAND

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GEORGE L. WEST
Vice Consul
Helsinki (1943-1945)

George L. West was born in Seattle, Washington in 1910. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University in 1933. His Foreign Service career included positions in Paris, Godthab, Stockholm, Helsinki, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, and Bonn. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 9, 1990.

WEST: Then I arrived in Sweden. Maybe this little incident is worth telling. We had a legation there, and they were beefing it up quite a bit during the war for reporting purposes, covering German-occupied Europe.

I arrived there, and Herschel Johnson was the Minister. He was an old pro after a couple of days. He was occupying a very elegant apartment, which had belonged to the King's brother. He said he wanted to have a junior officer living with him, so that he could carry on from home at times.

He had a reputation for calling a Chargé up at one o'clock in the morning and saying, "Winthrop, I've been thinking about..." He was hardworking and a good professional.

The Minister asked me if I'd be interested in living there with him. I don't think I had any particular suspicions at the time, but I did know that after living with my boss for two years in Greenland (that is when he was there), I wasn't too anxious to continue that.

The bright lights of Stockholm were really rather appealing. I was just 32. I backed out. Then that summer, another fellow who I was living with, a fellow named Alan Leitner, he'd had a similar experience when he arrived in Sweden, and he, too, had dodged it. Over in Finland,

Minister... One of the problems of being 80 is that, although I can remember these things, I can't remember names.

Q: Don't worry about the names.

WEST: Arthur Schoenfeld was the Minister. He was taken out, and Rob McClintock, whom I'd known from Stanford, became the Chargé.

The department wanted to send someone over there to be with McClintock, so they asked Herschel Johnson at Stockholm if they could spare somebody. He then suggested that I be sent over.

So I went over to Finland and had an apartment. It was pretty bad; we were under bombardment. So finally I moved into the legation residence with the McClintocks. We'd be up on the roof a couple nights a week with incendiaries.

Q: At this point we might mention that it was a peculiar situation, that Finland was kind of an ally of the Germans, but not at war with us.

WEST: That's right. The Germans had gone in. All the legations were Axis countries, so to speak, except for two neutrals, Sweden and Switzerland, and then the U.S. and Brazil. There was the black sheep of a prominent family (sent about as far away as they could get him from Brazil) who was the Brazilian Chargé.

Along about Easter, '43, we got instructions, because we were surrounded by Germans. Everybody who came in the legation was photographed right across the street. We weren't allowed out of the city. We could go downtown.

We did go to the consular luncheons, which were something, because all the Consuls were Finnish citizens, and this was their opportunity to really put it on, foodwise, liquorwise.

The Germans were... Mannerheim would never meet with Hitler.

Q: Mannerheim was the Marshal who was also [President of the Republic] the head of [?]

WEST: A great man. He told us our codes had been compromised. We'd known that. I think they were compromised in Yugoslavia, actually. He was very standoffish, but the Germans were very much in occupation. You can't blame the Finns after the Winter War. Any enemy of the Soviet Union was their enemy. But things were pretty rough for the people there.

Then came Easter of '43, and the department instructed us to break relations with the Finns. That Easter weekend I was over in Stockholm, with my former colleagues out on my old boat on the Mälaren sailing.

McClintock was authorized to break relations within 48 hours. He was to convert money, Finnmarks, into dollars. He got his wife out. She was pregnant and came over to Stockholm.

I was in constant communication with him during this period. Then a message came through to Sweden. The message was: If you have not already done so, do not, repeat, not break relations.

The responsibility for the Katyn massacres finally had been recognized as the Soviets'. And they did not want that to be associated with our breaking relations with the Finns.

Q: The Katyn massacres were the massacre of Polish prisoners of war by the secret police of the Soviets.

WEST: So I stayed on in Sweden. My work was chiefly with reporting on German... We had a special reporting section reporting on German-occupied Europe. My particular assignment was the Baltic States and Finland. I had a group of former Presidents.

By this time, Germany was occupying the Baltic States. The Soviets had, then the Germans. This was when the Germans pushed to the east.

I had a number of former Presidents, Foreign Ministers, etc., of Latvia, Lithuania, and particularly Estonia, working for me monitoring German radio broadcasts from the other side, and trying to put together as much of a picture as we could.

I was commuting once a week to Helsinki with a pouch, with oral messages, back and forth to McClintock. I'd go over, he'd meet me at the airport and give me what there was, and then I'd fly back.

We'd have lunch in the woods outside the airport. Once I almost got on the plane from Riga by mistake. "Achtung! Achtung!" -- I thought it was calling the plane for Stockholm. I didn't though.

But at any rate, I was enamored with the daughter of this former Estonian Foreign Minister. So then about Christmas time, '43, they decided that they would give McClintock a break. Meanwhile I had stood by for the birth of his son in Stockholm.

This time, Johnson was asked to name two people. He named Leitner and myself, both of whom had refused to live with him. Of course, later it was exposed that Herschel Johnson was a homosexual. At that time, he had a young guy named Bloomingdale, who was supposed to be a Special Assistant, CIA, he had this boy, who later was caught with him in Brazil. This isn't the kind of thing...

Q: No, but it gives a little feel for the problems. But was this sort of suspicioned or you just didn't, I mean both of you...

WEST: We put our own things together. It was suspicioned at that time. The full confirmation didn't come until after the war. Johnson was then at the U.N. as deputy to Warren Austin, our first Ambassador to the U.N. Then he went to Brazil, and he had Bloomingdale there, too. I don't know the whole story down there.

Meanwhile, the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing, Leitner had received orders to go to London. And so, West was supposed to go.

I was not too anxious to go back. I was somewhat involved. I was way up in the north, at Sieliensborg for Christmas, Lucia and all the rest of them.

McClintock sent me the Finnish paper, the *Helsinkisanomat*, with the announcement of my assignment there. This is rather a good story, because they had this article, all in Finnish, that this was the final insult of sending an officer, even more junior than McClintock, to be the Chargé. The article was in Finnish, but broke into English when it quoted from my biography: "Appointed Foreign Service officer unqualified." Instead of "unclassified." You went in as Unclassified C in those days, Vice Consul and Third Secretary. The editor, old Aerko (we used to go in the *Soundov* with him), was a good friend of mine. McClintock took great delight in underscoring this in red and sending it to me.

At any rate, I dodged it, and they sent Ed Gullion from London. He arrived in Stockholm more dead than alive. I guess he hated my guts, because he'd had a great setup, both professionally and personally, in London. He went on... I mention his name because later on he did break relations. (I guess it was in the summer of '44.) And he, in turn, was transferred to Stockholm.

Q: Well, what was the attitude of the Swedes towards the United States, and how did we deal with them while you were there?

WEST: Depends on the time and place. Sweden, when we first arrived, made a fetish out of their neutrality. They were not too friendly. There were some who were fine, but others, no.

Q: The war was going well for Germany at that time.

WEST: That's right, that's right. On the other hand, you get into the south of Sweden, where the nearer to Germany you were the more pro-Axis they seemed to be.

You go over to the west coast, Goteborg, and we were shipping ball bearings out of there every other night to England.

I wasn't personally concerned. In fact I did get down to Malmo once, just to do the pouch for our Consul down there.

But then, after the landings, it got considerably better. A lot of our aviators were force-landed in Sweden, as were a certain number of Germans. For awhile, the Swedes were releasing one-against-one. Then we were allowed to build up a credit as things got better.

In early '45 when they called for the U.N. organizing conference, first McClintock was assigned back to the department to go to the U.N. conference in San Francisco, then I was.

He got off, but it took me a hell of a time to find the ideal conditions. In this flight, it was a larger transport, which went way north on dark nights.

I was told that after the San Francisco conference I would be assigned to our mission next to the Netherlands government in London.

Stanley Hornbeck was the so-called Ambassador at that time. When I'd first gone through London on my way to Sweden, Rudy Schoenfeld (the brother of the guy who was in Finland) was the number two to Biddle (our Ambassador to these other countries, to the exiled governments).

JACK K. MCFALL
Ambassador
Finland (1952-1955)

Jack K. McFall was born in Colorado in 1905. As a Foreign Service officer he was posted to Canada, Greece and was Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. Subsequently he was ambassador to Finland. He was interviewed by Horace Torbert in 1988.

Q: What was the last thing that happened in Congressional Relations before you left, the last big thing you remember before you left? You were always so busy in that job, it's hard to say.

MCFALL: I think one of the most interesting developments was when the Secretary issued the statement about Alger Hiss. You can imagine what that statement did up on the Hill. Some members of Congress wouldn't even open their office to me. One heard comments such as, "That damn fool that you're working for," they'd say, "how could he make a statement like that when the issue is before the court?" So I really had some rugged sledding after that for a not inconsiderable period of time.

When it came time for me to go to Finland, Acheson called me up to have lunch in his office with him. At the conclusion of the lunch, he asked me, "Now you're leaving, have you any thoughts that you want to leave with me?"

I said, "Mr. Secretary, there's one in particular that I do. I don't know whether you have any realization of what you did to me and my staff in terms of the Hiss statement that you made some while back." I said, "It was ruinous. It was devastating. I just wondered why you didn't consult someone about the effect it would have on our legislative program before you made such a statement."

He said, "No, I know very well. I didn't consult anybody. It just came out. I can tell you this, that it was not one of the smartest things that I ever did in my life." So he recognized that it did have repercussions in certain phases of our operations.

Q: Let's lead into Finland. How did you decide to leave and get out of this mess you were in?

MCFALL: I went into see Acheson and told him I finally had reached the point where I was totally exhausted from this job, and that I hoped he would move me to the field, and I didn't care where it was or on what job. I said I felt the time had come after nearly three years in the job for me to move on. It had been a rugged three years. I was nearly broke. I'd spent a heap of my own money in entertaining congressmen at my home and at other places.

He said, "I can understand full well. We're going to look into that matter." That's the way he put it.

Well, the next thing I knew, Carl Humelsine came in to see me and said, "We're going to send you to the field. You have three choices. You can go to Thailand, Sri Lanka, or Finland." He said, "You think it over. Go and talk it over with your wife, and think it over, which post you want to take." I thought that was very considerate to be given a choice like that.

Of course, I picked Finland. That was one of the smartest things I ever did in my life because it turned out to be a marvelous experience in a wonderful post among delightful people. The Finns are so refreshing to be among once you get to know them. They're somewhat slow to warm up to you. They first want to look you over head to toe. They are very discerning. And once they make a friendship decision, it is an unqualified commitment. There are wonderful friendships that one builds with them.

One of the happy events of my life took place on my sixtieth birthday some ten years after I had departed from Finland and had been retired for several years. I was awakened at two a.m. with a call from Western Union informing me they had a cable from Finland which at my request they read to me. It was a congratulatory cable from an old Finnish friend. But before the next twenty-four hours had passed, Western Union was kept busy calling me and reading like messages, all from Finland, including a long one from the Finnish President Kekkonen. I assure you it was a series of heartwarming developments for me. As I recall, I received sixteen cablegrams--all from Finland. I later learned that the largest Finnish newspaper had published that it was my sixtieth birthday. The fact that I had been no part of the Finnish scene for nearly ten years appeared not to concern the message senders.

It was a three-year period, right at the turning point in Finnish history, when Finland just about went down the drain to the Russians as a result of the economic pressures that the Soviets put on them. At the end of the war, the Finns had to pay what was roughly the equivalent of \$500 million in reparations to the Russians. The Russians, of course, saw the chance here to exercise pressure, so they told the Finns, "No, we don't want your wood products. Of course not. We have wood products of our own in Russia. What we want is for you to build a heavy metal industry. We want you to build ships. We want you to build locomotives and heavy equipment."

Well, the Finns just looked askance. Practically all they made at the time were pots and pans; that was the only metal industry they had. They couldn't convince the Soviets, however.

"No, you're going to have to establish a heavy metal industry." Of course, the design of the Russians was manifested; they knew damn well if they succeeded in having the Finns establish this new industry, thereafter the Finns would never be able to sell the products of such heavy industries to western countries as the cost of the products would be too great. So they had them over the barrel, so to speak. That's what went on.

As the matter unfolded over the years, the Finns made a series of trade treaties with the Russians to exchange with the Soviets the metal products that the Finns had been forced to make. This trade went on for an extended period. As I recall, there was a series of three successive reparation agreements which were instrumental in paying off this reparations bill. So it was all paid off, and when the last payment was due, the Finns made the last payment right on time, just as they did with their debt to the United States growing out of World War I. They're the only nation, as you know, that has paid, on time, right through the years. So they've honored their debt obligation all the way through. No other nation debtor can say the same.

It was a delight dealing with the Finns because you knew once you had their word, that was it. They would never backtrack on any commitment. Once they'd said yes, they meant yes, and that was it. As you probably remember, Kekkonen was the president of Finland for, I think, some twenty-two years, having served the longest of any nation's chief executive at the time he died. I had so many experiences in that country, but I don't know how many of them you'd be interesting in having recounted.

Q: What were the issues between the United States and Finland at that time? Were there any particular problems?

MCFALL: Remember, my days in Finland corresponded with continuing cold war activities world-wide. We were adjacent to a seven-hundred mile Finnish-Russian border. Finnish territory had been bifurcated by the Soviets taking over a stretch of Finnish territory named Porkkala a few miles east of Helsinki on the sea. It was heavily fortified by the Soviets with large guns to protect the sea avenue into Leningrad.

Humiliation of the Finns even in greater degree occurred when the Soviets, as a part of the armistice ending the Finnish-Soviet hostilities, demanded and secured the Karelia area from Finland which was adjacent to Soviet Russia and which was Finland's most productive and prized land. When the armistice terms were announced, only some seventy-two hours were given the 475,000 Finns living in Karelia to either leave Karelia and their land and march to the new Finnish border, or to remain on their property in Karelia under the new Communist government. Best evidence is that all but a hundred or so of the 475,000 residents just walked out of their farms, driving their livestock ahead of them and crossing over into the new Finland minus Karelia. The story of how the Finns met this refugee crisis and solved it with little world attention being given to it is still another testimonial to Finnish spirit of "can do" or "sisu."

Our main mission at our embassy in Helsinki was to try to ensure the continued economic viability of Finland by encouraging its resistance to continuing Soviet economic pressures. We were called upon, on more than one occasion, to try and stop Finnish tankers with their destination Communist China from delivering any petroleum to China.

We were successful by using a variety of approaches some of which were last-minute efforts, so to speak, just before the tanker was to enter its Chinese port destination. Methods employed, as far as I know, are still classified.

Yes, I had a very active and, I believe, effective tour in Finland.

One point might be of some interest. I received a letter of which I still have a copy. It was from Richard Nixon. During my period as Assistant Secretary of State as the McCarthy fiasco began to develop, one of the few McCarthy Republicans that I could depend upon to discuss anything with me--one who had not pulled back in terms of talking with me and being frank with me was, oddly enough, Richard Nixon. Out of the blue, he called me up at my State Department office one day and said, "Jack, I want you to know that I make a sharp distinction between our nation's foreign responsibilities and our domestic responsibilities. I know what your difficulty is now. You have a real problem. I've talked among my Republican colleagues, and I know very well that you're having problems along the line in dealing with the McCarthy group." But he said, "I want you to know that my office is open to you at any time, and I want you to come in any time you want, and I will talk with you on whatever legislation you're proposing. I'll be perfectly frank with you and tell you whether I will support legislation you may be promoting, or if I won't support you, or whether I might support you if certain changes are made. I want you to know that my office is always open to you for that purpose."

Well, you know, as a result of his offer, I used it several times. I went in to him because he was a splendid "sounding board," you know. He was just exactly that. He was as frank as he said he would be. He'd say, "No, I wouldn't support you on that proposal under any circumstances," or "You'll have my nod on that one." Whatever his views were, he would express them usually unequivocally.

Before I went over to Finland, he had asked me, "I wish you'd write me a letter when you get over there to tell me whether you think our policy toward Finland is going to change or not." So I sat down after I'd been there a couple of months and saw the picture unfolding, and I wrote him a long letter. I told him that I had reason to believe that our policy was going to continue just as it was. I sounded out my Finnish sources, and I had no reason to believe that we were going to make any particular changes in any direction in our Finnish policy, and the main thing now was just to see that the Finns held steadfast and didn't yield any more than absolutely essential to the Soviet economic pressures. That's the policy we were pursuing, and I hoped and expected it to be continued.

Then the way the Finns ultimately pulled out of this economic dilemma, pulled out of these doldrums of economic despair was remarkable. These shipyards and locomotive factories and such heavy industry development had been established from scratch by sheer dint of incessant hard labor. Imagine building all these ships in the outdoors--building those ships at ten, twenty, or thirty degrees below zero with the difficulty of welding--doing all the construction on these big ships in those sub-zero temperatures. But you know, it wasn't a matter of more than a few years before the Finns became competitive for sales to the west of the products of those metal industries that were established from scratch. So now the most outstanding icebreakers in the

world are built in Finland. Absolutely the best! They are all over the world. So now they have a beautifully balanced economy. As a matter of fact, it could be argued that it all turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the Finns ultimately wound up with a new heavy industry that turned out profitably for them.

Q: They are great people. The company I worked for did some business with them before the war, in wood pulp, the paper business. We bought a lot of Finnish pulp. They were great people to do business with.

MCFALL: Oh, always. Such honesty and integrity all across the board!

Then I developed my travels in Finland. That was one thing I did that I believe was probably unique. I made up my mind I was going to get into every community in Finland of more than 5,000 people before I left the post providing that I remained in Finland for at least three years. So I was successful in this endeavor to the point of visiting forty of the forty-four cities and towns of more than 5,000 people. The onset of my heart problems caused me to fall ten percent short of the goal I had set. The experiences that flowed from those visits were just a series of absolute joys and delights! But they did take a toll on the body and the digestive tract.

Here was a typical example--typical particularly of the smaller communities visited. Of course, every place I went, the first thing you did was to call on the mayor, see the fire station, see their churches, maybe a school and such other buildings of which they might be prideful. Then the city fathers would have a huge dinner or lunch for me--always.

I remember one visit particularly because it was truly touching. It was at a place called Pietasaari up on the Baltic coast. I had made those sightseeing rounds that I mentioned to you, and now we were at luncheon. Three or four glasses of wine at each place setting, of course, and they'd gone down in the bowels of the civic building and pulled out this wine that was eighty-five or ninety years old that they'd been keeping for a special occasion. So the mayor--who was the toastmaster--in his fractured English (little wonder that his English was fractured as "up country Finns" get little chance to use any English) was introducing me, and he said, "We have a very important visitor. He is the ambassador from the United States. I have been looking in our town records, and I find that we have not had a foreign diplomat in our little community since Prince Henry came over from Sweden in 1218." (Laughs)

But that gives you an example of the kind of stimulating development that these community visits produced. I must say I did receive recognition for this program of visits. President Eisenhower, in the letter following my medical retirement, wrote me that he wanted to commend me for what he thought was a splendid job I had done in getting into the country and meeting the people.

Then I started another program. Fortunately, I had an excellent Foreign Service officer on my embassy staff who spoke Finnish. So we set up a series of meetings in the northern areas of Finland, including Lapland particularly, among the lumberjacks. We set up a series of meetings largely in the remote areas to attract the Finnish Communist groups who had considerable support in the lumberjack areas. Then we'd have a question and answer period. Those meetings

were, I thought, extremely effective. I believe I was successful in my talks to these groups. I think my background played a part there, my background and knowledge of our government and how it operated because many of the questions dealt with our government. "Tell us about your Social Security." "Tell us about your unemployment compensation." "Tell us about the health services you provide." And I was able to give a good account of all of them because I'd been constantly exposed to information on such matters. I'd been through the legislative and the appropriations processes for many years before that. So those were very effective meetings. I think, really, the whole tour was highly successful.

In addition to this program of meeting with the logging groups, I embarked on two other enterprises, both of which involved considerable travels. The first effort was directed at Finnish industry. I visited several manufacturing plants that produced for both domestic and foreign consumption. Some of them were located in Helsinki, but many were spotted throughout Finland. These visits were helpful, for sure, in both educating me on how Finland was "keeping up with the times" as well as providing me an ever-enlarging group of helpful contacts, some of which were to prove valuable as my time in Finland moved on.

Then there was one more program that I decided to undertake - a tour of several Finnish farms, with the details of the trip efficiently arranged by the Finnish National Farm Federation. I was able to discuss Finnish farm problems with the farmers of each of the many farmhouses visited. And what hospitality was bestowed on Mrs. McFall and me at each farm! My recollection is that we encountered a groaning table of food at each of our stops--food that the farmer's wife had slaved over in preparation for hours, if not for days. And, of course, we had to be enthusiastic at each farm in extolling the endless varieties of food offered us. It was a matter of us eating six times a day in order not to offend any of our hosts!

So here, again, are two more methods of operation by which a Chief of Mission can, in my opinion, add measurably to the success of his or her mission in the country of assignment.

Another truly heartwarming event occurred when I had been scheduled to visit a rural school far from Helsinki. It had been snowing for a better part of the day, and there was some six inches of snow on the ground. To get to the school from the town where we had stopped overnight would provide some real travel burdens. I phoned the school telling the teacher of the travel difficulty, but she said, "Oh, you simply must come, the children have been awaiting your coming with great expectancy, and we have a surprise for you that we have all worked very hard on." She said, "Rent a sled, and you will make it." And so we did. And what a delight it was covering those eight miles as the snow enveloped us en route--boyhood days relived.

As we arrived at the school, a dear little Finnish girl presented me flowers, and just as I was proceeding to the hand-hewn desk and benches, the surprise suddenly arrived. The teacher went to the rickety piano, and then a full chorus of song emerged from those young Finnish voices. And what was the song? It was the "Star Spangled Banner" sung in English! They had spent days learning the words, and they took no shortcuts in their mastering effort.

I have related only two of the forty tours of this type, but at least these two should serve to show the kind rewards and delights experienced at the various community visits.

And so it was that by working so hard, my heart began to go downhill. In other oral history interviews, I think I did explain about the time I was ordered by my Finnish doctor to take a vacation because of my health deterioration. My heart doctor examined me and said, "I will not treat you here after another month because you may not be here after a month." Well, that put the fear of God in me.

So finally one of my Finnish friends came up with a proposition. He told me, "I have just the place for you. I have a comfortable lodge on an island about twenty-five miles from the Russian border way up in Lapland. We will go to Lapland, and you can have ten days up there. I will take my son and wife, and you bring your wife. You'll have total relaxation."

This proposal fitted in with my doctor's edict that if I didn't get some rest soon, "I will not treat you anymore. You won't be around." So we went up to Lapland, and I'll never forget that trip. In getting there, we took almost every kind of transportation known to man--airplane, train, and jeep--finally winding up in a Lapp canoe. We then paddled for a considerable distance before finally coming to this little island Shangri-la, where I was to have the delight of uninterrupted relaxation and recuperation.

The first day we devoted to shooting kapakalia. Wonderful game bird shooting it was. Then the next day, the second day, we went fishing and caught salmon, salmon, salmon.

Now we come to the third day. I was just beginning to feel like a human being. We three men, the host, his son, and myself, were luxuriating in the sauna when all of a sudden, up there in remote Lapland where there was no other habitation within thirty miles in any direction, we heard this "putt, putt, putt" sound. My host put up his hand to silence our conversation and exclaimed, "That's a motorboat!" So with that, we all jumped up and ran out of the sauna. We were stark naked, of course, as we ran out onto the little dock that my host had also hand built there, and sure enough, coming right toward us on the horizon was a small Lapp canoe, a little Lapp boat hollowed out of one large log. It pulled right up to the side of the dock. Three diminutive Lapps--of course, all Lapps are diminutive--were in the canoe. We could sense that they were kind of weaving in the boat when they pulled into the dock facing we three men standing on the dock, stark naked, in mid-September. One of the three was clutching a piece of paper.

The three of them piled out of the boat onto the dock and lined up opposite the three of us. The middle Lapp was clutching the small piece of paper, and each of the other two were trying to hold him up, one on each side of him. The holder of the paper was weaving back and forth. Finally, when the one Lapp let go of the center Lapp in order to hand the paper to my host, bang--he fell flat on his face. So here we were, the three of us standing and facing the three of them, with the three us stark naked, and the three of them clothed in their colorful Lapland outfits. It was indeed a memorable picture! There was an empty bottle of booze reposing in the boat.

So my host leaned down and picked up the paper that the prone Lapp was still clutching, tore open the envelope, and passed the paper to me. He said, "This is a telegram in English. It's for you." The telegram said, "You are summoned to the United Nations, which opens on the twenty-

third of September. We would like you to report two or three days ahead of the convening of the U.S. General Assembly in order for you to be given briefings in the State Department, covering 106 items on the agenda." It said, "However, we would like you to become ambassador before you depart Finland. Ask president of Finland if he will accept your credentials as ambassador to Finland before you leave." (At the time, our mission in Helsinki was a legation headed by a minister, but agreements had been reached with the Finnish government to raise the mission to embassy status following similar action to be taken by the Soviets.) The telegram also said I would be senior advisor to the American delegation to the United Nations on European matters.

Well, there I was up there in remote Finland with only two days of my "recuperation" having passed and now to be headed for the pressures of a new assignment. We again traveled all day by several types of transportation arranged by our host by means of instructions sent by the returning Lapp couriers to the "last outposts" Lapp telegraph office and finally got back to the embassy about ten o'clock at night after some sixteen hours of hectic travel. The first thing I asked on arrival was, "Where are my credentials?"

"Credentials? Credentials? What credentials?" Yes, there were no credentials, there were no credentials that day! So I wired the State Department immediately: "How am I going to become ambassador without any credentials?"

The Department wired back at three o'clock in the morning, as I recall, and informed me, "Sorry. There has been a terrible flap. President Eisenhower hasn't even signed your credentials as yet. However, we're contacting the President, who is in a Denver hospital, and he has agreed to sign your credentials right away. Query. Will president of Finland accept telegraphic credentials?"

Well, certainly being no authority on credentials, I hadn't the slightest idea what kind of a reaction I would receive from the president of Finland, Paasikivi, to such a credentials proposal. Kekkonen was, at this time, the prime minister. I called him, and I said, "I have a question here. First, will the president of Finland (who was at that time eighty-two years old and living 150 miles away from Helsinki in a summer retreat) receive my telegraphic credentials so I could get to this United Nations meeting now scheduled for a scant few days in the future?"

He said, "Now, you know the president is quite old, and this is asking a lot for him to come in 150 miles to Helsinki. What is this about?"

"Well," I replied, "my government has asked me to inquire if President Paasikivi is willing to accept telegraphic credentials covering my designation as American Ambassador to Finland."

Well, the prime minister then called me back and said he had talked with the president again, and the president had told him that he would come in to Helsinki and accept my credentials, but only on condition that I would give my word that I was coming back to Finland. Well, in the hustle and bustle, I had forgotten to tell Kekkonen that the message did say I would be returning to Finland, so I told the foreign minister that, "I can assure the president of Finland on that point."

So I received the "telegraphic credentials," and I'll never forget it. A series of those pink sheets, you know, those telegraphic pink sheets that numbered about ten pages. I put them in a large

fancy white envelope with the seal of the United States implanted all alluringly. The staff and I, in full dress, were ready to proceed to the presidential palace. The word had been put out in the newspapers, in the headlines, "The American Minister is to Present Credentials as Ambassador." Well, it was an astonishing development to observe because the embassy was less than a mile from the palace, and the streets had thousands of people line up just to observe my staff and me to make that short drive to the palace! It was thrilling! It was truly a thrilling occasion for all of our embassy, and the Finns appeared to participate fully in the glee!

The Russians, you see, were the first to upgrade their mission, so they had attained their embassy status some short time previously. We were the second country to make the change.

When our contingent reached the presidential palace, we entered the courtyard where the Finnish army band gave a fine rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner" after which next I entered the palace in the company of Foreign Minister Kekkonen, and we were greeted by the Finnish president. What a dear old man Paasikivi was! I was still clutching the credentials, those infamous telegraphic credentials that I'm inclined to believe set a precedent in such matters. I said, "Mr. President, I thank you for receiving me. I have my credentials, and I want to present them to you."

The president took the envelope out of my hand, he looked at me and said, "My prime minister tells me there is something in here that is just not like it should be."

I said, "Mr. President, I'm inclined to think that's a fair statement of fact."

He said, "Then I think we don't open it." He took the envelope and put it on the side table and never did open it while I was there.

I then told the president, "If any Finn might have had any question about whether you deserved to be president of Finland, they should observe this performance."

Q: *Wonderful!*

Continuation of interview: June 3, 1988

Q: *Ambassador McFall, when we left off nearly a month ago now, we were just getting you out of Finland, at least for the first time. You had been called back to Washington, I believe, to go to the United Nations. Would you like to pick up from there?*

MCFALL: I think we were at the point where I'd just finished presenting my credentials at the palace. From the presidential palace I was rushed back to our embassy so I could take off my formal clothes and go at once to the airport. They held the plane's departure for an hour for me so I could get to the airport, driving sixty miles an hour. I recall musing on the aircraft after departure not "king for a day" but "ambassador for an hour." What a hectic stage of events! The flight to New York at least broke the series of hectic movements for a short spell, it was uneventful. From the time of arrival in New York, it was a continuing series of problems of one type or another that I just didn't quite surmount, as you will see as I speak along.

I arrived at our UN offices on Park Avenue and reported in. The young lady there that was to be my secretary showed me my desk and said, "I think the first thing you should do is to go in and see Ambassador Lodge (who was then our ambassador to the UN) and pay your respects."

I was thinking of all of the times when I was in my job in Washington as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, and people asked me, "Who was the most difficult individual in Congress with whom you had to deal? Who was your bete noire?" I think they all expected me to say Senator McCarthy, but that would have been inaccurate. The point about it was that McCarthy was the only senator I had never met--he wouldn't let me in his office to meet him. So that took care of itself. But the senator giving me the greatest difficulty had been Lodge.

I said to my secretary, "Yes, I know. I haven't been looking forward to that either. I was engaged in crossing swords with him a good portion of the time he was in the Senate."

So she said, "But you have to do it."

So I went in to his office to see him, and he was very gracious. We chatted for a couple of minutes, and I said to him, "You know, I'm just really upset. I've been moving at breakneck speed to get back here from Finland. I was right in the midst of negotiations with the Finnish government on a couple of very important matters. Why they've pulled me out of Finland when I was right in the middle of important negotiations to come back here, I'll never understand. I don't know who in the devil engineered it."

He looked at me and smilingly said, "No mystery, I did." I admit I had some difficulty in believing that because, as I tell you, he'd been the like of a problem child to me most of the time he was in the Senate.

The next very interesting development, I thought, was that just after I'd seen Lodge, I walked out of my office again and started to go to the elevator just as the elevator arrived. My little secretary came running breathlessly out of the office and exclaimed, "Oh, I'm so glad I caught you! Secretary Dulles has just telephoned. He's in the Waldorf Towers, and he wants you to come over right away."

I replied, "Secretary Dulles? Why would Secretary Dulles want to see me?"

She answered, "Yours is not to reason why, but to get to the Waldorf Towers posthaste. He's going to address the United Nations at the opening speech tomorrow, and he wants to talk to you."

I was impatient to get over to see the United Nations building. I'd never seen it up to this point. So I hailed a cab and proceeded to the Waldorf Towers and up to one of the top floors, whichever it was, where Dulles' living quarters and his temporary office was located. It was at this point that the ensuing comedy of errors began.

There was a policeman at the door of his suite. I showed my pass and walked in to a little anteroom where there were a couple of settees and four doors--the door you came in, the door over here, a door over there, and a double door over there. There wasn't a soul around, and all the doors were closed. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know which door to rap on. I knew Dulles lived in this suite, and I didn't want to walk in on his bedroom. So I just sat and sat and nothing happened. I suppose I was in there for ten minutes.

All of a sudden, the door from which I had entered originally, opened again, and a debonair individual walked in. From television, I knew who it was; it was Casey, who was the foreign minister of Australia. He had been referred to as "the poor man's Anthony Eden." We introduced ourselves, just the two of us there in the waiting room. Casey said, "I have an appointment with the Secretary." When I then identified myself as ambassador to Finland, I noticed that he had a very quizzical look on his face as if to ask, "What in the devil is he doing here?"

So we chatted in the anteroom there for about five minutes, and presently one of the doors--the French double door--suddenly opened, and there stood Secretary Dulles. After greeting and shaking hands with us, he said, "Please come in to the salon, gentlemen." He then said to Casey, "Have this chair over there." And to me, "Have this chair over here." And with that, Dulles deposited himself into a very comfortable overstuffed chair and pulled up a foot stool. He said, speaking to Foreign Minister Casey now, "When we were last talking here, you ended your discourse telling me about Australia's concerns about certain aspects of SEATO."

On this statement by Dulles, my growing concern about just why I was a part of this meeting became immediate and worrisome. Just what was I, the American Ambassador to Finland, doing in a discussion with the foreign minister of Australia and the American Secretary of State concerning the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization--a subject about which I had had no briefing and about which I had no breadth of knowledge?

As Dulles talked, he seemed to be in a reflective mood. He started in by going back to 1905, the Geneva discussions of 1905, and from there he went on talking, leaning back, philosophizing and enjoying his own comments. Then he shifted into the whole question of the travel of the Secretary of State, and the burden that it imposes on him in his ability to carry on his responsibilities. He developed this theme in both length and depth. Suddenly, the thought flashed across my mind that the only conceivable reason I would have been in that room was to monitor the conversation. I certainly couldn't contribute anything to the discussion!

So, for right or wrong, I made the decision that such was my mission. I was trying to think, "My God, can I remember the details of their discussions connected with the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization?" I just barely knew its name. In any case, I thought, "I'm going to try to remember what is said, if it's at all possible."

The meeting broke up, I guess, about a half an hour afterwards, and both Casey and I went out the door back into the anteroom. Just as I was going out the door leading to the hallway, one of the other doors that led to his staff section opened, and Dulles' secretary grabbed my arm and said, "Oh, my God, we owe you an abject apology! You see, you are here at the United Nations as the senior advisor to the American delegation on European and British Commonwealth

matters. We just assumed that when Casey wanted to talk to Secretary Dulles, he was going to talk to him about a matter on the United Nations agenda. We just took that for granted. But now we realize that matters on the United Nations agenda were not discussed at all which leaves the staff both contrite and apologetic. I gather that not a single item pertaining to the United Nations matter had been discussed!"

I then said, "You now have a prime example of the dangers of improper assumptions."

Dulles' secretary replied, "Well, I do hope you remember what was said so you can go write a memcon on it."

Q: You must have got some instructions, I hope, on what the senior advisor was to do.

MCFALL: Oh, yes, we had plenty of overnight instructions. I told you about the marathon briefings given me over the previous weekend in the State Department, and the position our government would take on each of the 106 agenda items. But the matter under discussion between Casey and Dulles had never been mentioned in my State Department briefings, and, furthermore, it is a bit far-fetched, as I see it, to expect an ambassador just called back from Finland to be informed on the myriad details of a treaty arrangement, including, among a series of technical subjects, troop numbers and dispositions, share of costs, etc., in an area of the world about as remote from Finnish problems as one could find. No. None of the instructions I had been given dealt even remotely with the situation that confronted me, so I just had to perform as best I could under my own limitation of lack of background knowledge of the subject matter under discussion.

On this note, I left the Dulles quarters and returned to my office, very weary but faced with a formidable task, namely, the writing of the memcon covering the Dulles-Casey meeting. I spent seven nonstop hours at the task, having had no dinner. I fell into bed well after midnight, in a state of exhaustion.

As a parenthesized remark, it is of interest that this memcon evoked considerable interest as well as surprise across the top echelon of the State Department. According to Douglas MacArthur, the councilor of the State Department, the Dulles conversation I reported on his travels; on demands on his time; on his responsibilities and on his official frustrations had not been theretofore discussed by him in the detailed way he did on that occasion. MacArthur lauded this memcon capture of Dulles' attitudes on the variety of subject matter that he addressed on this occasion. Apparently, the memcon was given wide top-level circulation in the Department.

I arrived at my office on the following morning--the morning the UN General Assembly was to convene--and after making a few corrections prior to typing on the many-paged memcon, I started out of the office to the elevator en route to the UN building which I had never seen. But no - it was not yet to be, for again, just as had happened the day before, Dulles' office phoned and asked me to return to his Waldorf suite immediately, which I did.

This time, I found Sir Leslie Monroe, the New Zealand Foreign Minister, following me by a few minutes into Dulles' reception anteroom. But this time, my mission was made clear. It seems that

Monroe had phoned Dulles, irate that Casey had "stolen a march on him" in presenting the Australian viewpoint on some of the contentious items involving SEATO, and Monroe wanted to present his side of the differences at once. So, once again, I sat in on a discussion about SEATO.

Of course, my second presence is explained in the fact that the Dulles secretariat now had me made available as a highly qualified expert on all matters involving SEATO--highly qualified, if you will, after having been exposed to technical SEATO subject matter for the first time ever on the previous day! So now my instruction from the secretariat was to prepare a memcon covering that meeting.

As I recall, at this time Sir Leslie Monroe was either the president of the UN General Assembly or was about to become such. This was the day that the United Nations was to open. Monroe said, "I'm going to walk over to the UN building for the official opening of the General Assembly. Do you want to walk over with me?"

I said, "Well, I haven't even been able to see the building as yet."

He said, "Come on. We'll walk over together." The weather was hot and very humid as the two of us walked the several blocks to the United Nations building. I had reached a point about a hundred yards from the UN building entrance when I began to feel very weak and suddenly saw spots in front of my eyes. Then I began to feel so weak, I thought I was going to faint. I grabbed onto Monroe. He was able, then, by supporting me, to get me into the building, and he took me right to Ambassador Lodge's office. I laid down on the settee there, Lodge not having yet arrived. I had this problem with my heart, as I had mentioned earlier in this interview. So I was very disturbed about it, but I was also conscious that I had to find a way to write the memorandum before I forgot what had been discussed in the meeting, or I had become further physically incapacitated.

So I got up after about an hour of lying on his couch there, and I dictated to his secretary the memorandum of conversation, which turned out to be much shorter and easier to prepare than the one with Casey of the previous day. It took about an hour. She said, "Now that you've finished this chore, I think it is important that we get a doctor for you and find out what your health situation is."

So she called a doctor, who didn't take very long in arriving. After a hurried checkup, he said to me, "We're going to send you to Staten Island to the Public Health Service Hospital right now for an examination." As it turned out, that was the beginning of the end of my career. I was six weeks in the hospital in Staten Island. It was quite a severe heart attack.

After the six weeks in the hospital, my wife took me to Florida for further recuperation. Of course, I was determined, because I had promised Finnish President Paasikivi, that I would go back to Finland. I felt an obligation to carry out my commitment to him. The doctors in the State Department didn't want me to take on any more service in Finland. They didn't want me to return to Finland. As you know, the winter climate in Finland doesn't lend itself to heart therapy. But I was determined.

I just said, "I must go back to Finland." And the doctors finally relented. I was back in Finland for about five months, going downhill all the time. Finally, I threw in the sponge. I wrote Under Secretary Henderson and told him that I had come to the realization that the doctors were right, and it was time for me to pull out.

But let me say that the State Department was very good to me. They asked me, at this point, to take six months' leave of absence during which period they'd give me every legal kind of advanced annual leave and sick leave possible, which they did. So Mrs. McFall and I took six months for recuperation which consisted largely of slow freighter travel to many areas of the world. No rush, no pressure. Of course, I had to come back at the end of the six months and face the medical board again for a clearance before I could be given a new assignment, if any.

Had I mentioned that Secretary Dulles lived next door to our Washington, D.C. home?

THEODORE SELLIN
Finnish Language Training
Washington, DC (1957)

Political/Labor Officer
Helsinki (1959-1965)

Political Counselor
Helsinki (1971-1973)

Theodore Sellin was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and attended the University of Pennsylvania. He entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His posts include Denmark, Washington, DC, Finland, Norway, the Naval War College, OES, and Sweden. Sellin was interviewed by Tom Dunnigan in 2003.

Q: Now, you were selected for Finnish training.

SELLIN: Yes, even though I hadn't applied for it. And that was a direct result of a visit to Copenhagen while I was there, of an inspector named John Burns...

Q: Oh, I know who that is.

SELLIN: Who later went on to become a variety of things, including Director General of the Foreign Service. He then, in 1957, was with the inspection office. He came to Copenhagen. He was a bachelor, and still is, and I got to know him a little bit. He was very sociable and outgoing and had a couple of good friends on the staff there from earlier posts, so I got to know him fairly well. In fact, when he left, he was going to Stockholm to inspect and then on to Helsinki. They had left-hand driving in Sweden at the time. He had bought a car, a little Opel. I don't know if I

suggested it, or whether he asked me, but in any case, I drove him in his car up to Stockholm so I could see some friends. And we parted, and I never thought I'd see him again. And lo and behold, when he was looking at the Finnish language applications, this was five years after we had met, he saw my name which was still somewhere in the registry - these things never get expunged, I guess - and he said, "That's a place where this guy ought to go," because he had had so much fun himself in Helsinki, he was so admiring of the Finns. So he terminated my somewhat begrudging but developing interest, in Africa.

Q: As I remember, at that time, John Burns was at that time was principle aide to Loy Henderson. And as that, he would have sat on all these boards.

SELLIN: I see, okay.

Q: So, that's where your name came up.

SELLIN: Interesting.

Q: Yes, I remember that well. How long was the Finnish language training?

SELLIN: That was a nine-month course. A full nine months.

Q: That's a very difficult language.

SELLIN: It is, and you don't learn a hell of a lot in nine months. I had a somewhat slight disadvantage in that a) I spoke Swedish, which meant that I could cover for mistakes if I had some trouble reading something in Finnish, especially when I got there, I could read the Swedish press first and then I could sort of understand generally what they were writing about...

Q: Has Swedish crept into Finnish or not?

SELLIN: Oh, there are some cognates, sure. But many of them are fairly well buried because of the structure of the Finnish language, sixteen cases and so on. You can usually figure out what is a Swedish cognate. But no, with the training they did two things. First of all, very shortly after I got into this course, there were two people there, plus me... they disappeared. One was a...

Q: From the other agency.

SELLIN: From the other agency, and he went off, and I forget where the other was from, maybe he was USIA. So, for the bulk of this time, I was the only student. And it gets a bit draggy when you sit face-to-face with one instructor, six hours a day...

Q: Then at the end of this Indiana tour, you were assigned, logically, to Helsinki.

SELLIN: Correct.

Q: Which is very good. And you were in the political section.

SELLIN: I was the second officer in the political section.

Q: And concentrated on labor, among other things.

SELLIN: Among other things. It was called a Labor Reporting Officer slot, and it was a designated Finnish language position because of the fact that a lot of the labor people didn't speak any English or Swedish. So I did labor with my Finnish, what I called it [laughter]...

Q: [laughter]

SELLIN: It worked reasonably well.

Q: And labor is terribly important in Finland.

SELLIN: My arrival coincided with an extremely interesting evolution of the political system at the time, and that was to say that for the first time in Finnish history, the left wing, the Communist-front party called the SKDL, had in the most recent election in the year or so before I got there, gleaned 25% of the electorate and seats in the parliament, and together with the Social Democrats, that gave the left spectrum a majority. The Western world, and particularly Washington, was quite concerned about that. There was talk of they are going the way the French went, this is the way the Italians were going earlier... So there was keen interest in what was going on politically, especially in the labor movement, because that's where the inroads were being made. For me it was quite challenging because the Department and we were interested in such things as grass roots movements down to the union local's elections and Social Democrat youth, and even labor sports organizations. (End of tape)

Yes, I mentioned the worker's youth organization and others. So there was a slow but steady takeover or infiltration of the Social Democratic labor organizations by, to some extent, the Communists who were active in certain unions that were already Communist dominated. But the more important evolution was the left-wing splinter group of the Social Democratic Party. The phenomenon that occurred in Norway too, and in Finland at the time was that they broke away from the mainstream of the Social Democratic Party, and created their own organization known by the names of their two breakaway socialist leaders Emil Skog and Aare Simonen, that is, Skogists or Simonists. And that caught on to a certain extent, and they were working very hard to get the Skogists or the Simonists into the various labor organizations. Simonen's shift was particularly interesting because he had been a tough, right of center, anti-Communist Social Democrat.

So that was a sign of the deterioration. Once they would take over a sports organization or union or finally the, the SAK, the central trade union organization, as they began to get more power in those, the regular core of the Social Democratic Party became quite concerned, as did a lot of other people. I would say that in the five years that I spent there on the first tour, I really reported on the slow but sure incursion of this leftist element into the whole trade union structure. There

was in fact a right wing trade union, social democratic central organization called SAJ that was set up to compete with the SAK, which, and this was public knowledge later, was actually funded by the U.S. It was money that was filtered through American trade unions to their brother trade unions in this new organization, and in fact some of the money came from another agency, as subsequently became known in Finland.

Q: Of course. The AFL-CIO was very deeply into this.

SELLIN: Exactly. So that situation kind of deteriorated while I was there. It wasn't until after I left in 1964, end of '64, having arrived there in mid-summer of 1959, that the Finns themselves began to pull themselves together. One of the interesting phenomena here was the fact that this splinter of the trade union movement was really quite beneficial to the employers. So while the employers were somewhat concerned about the ideology or the ideological things that were going on in the unions, they were not too displeased by the fact that they had competing unions to deal with, which they could play off one against the other during wage negotiations. So, in some respects...

Q: Not one giant union to fight then.

SELLIN: That's right. Through divide and rule, they were able to weaken the central negotiation principle. In all the Scandinavian countries, the unions at that time, and as far as I know they still do, would have central negotiations between the equivalent of the AFL-CIO, and the employers association. And then the details would be worked out in the field. Thus, at those times the employers were pretty much able to emasculate those central agreements, or force demands that were inimical to the workers' interests, at least.

The other thing that went on was the infighting within the far left. I should say that the Communists were of course part of this problem as well, but not quite yet. They had their own distinct problems as time went on. These didn't see fruition until after I left, but there was a Stalinist faction and then there was a more moderate faction, if you want to call it that. And they were constantly at each other's throats. So there was disunity within the Communist party itself and that was reflected to some extent in the SKDL.

Q: That must have been very important to Soviet ambassador.

SELLIN: Yes, exactly. Although, in a curious way the Soviets were somewhat dismissive of the Finnish Communist Part. For example, when Khrushchev came on a visit on Finnish President Kekkonen's 60th birthday, unannounced, he would not meet with the local Communist Party bosses. In essence, the Soviet leadership and the Soviet Union really didn't want to deal with the Finnish Communists. They much preferred dealing with President Kekkonen and with the powers that be. So the Finnish Communist really got short shrift from the Soviet Union. Some money I'm sure went in, but they weren't trying to pump up the Communist Party, because I guess they realized that it might not work, or could work to their disadvantage. It was much better to have influential relations with the top leadership of the country. But it was an interesting time and there was plenty to do.

Q: As I recall, Finland was pretty well dominated by President Kekkonen in those years.

SELLIN: Oh, yes, indeed. He became the longest sitting, certainly in Western Europe, elected Head of State, until he finally became too ill to continue. There were some very strange things that went on around him. He was elected in 1956 with a one-vote majority in the electoral college, which is made up in part by the Parliament. The college was tied at 150 to 150 for several votes, and finally one vote switched, so he won by 151 to 149. It was widely suspected that it was a paid up job, somebody had switched for money. Of course, there was a lot of speculation about that all the time I was there, even though in time that issue died down. So, he took over in '56 and it was quite interesting because the Soviets had previously, a year before, cut off trade with Finland. The Prime Minister at the time, a Swedo-Finn named Fagerholm was also a candidate for President, running against Kekkonen.

Q: Was he a conservative or a...

SELLIN: No, he was a Social Democrat. But a Swedish-speaking Finn, well, he spoke Finnish, too. He lost the 1956 election to Kekkonen by the one vote. A year or so before, the Russians had severed trade relations with Finland. They were not pleased with some of the composition of a government Fagerholm was forming, and in retaliation they cut off trade. This became popularly known in Finland as the "night frost" and finally there were some changes made in the makeup of the government and trade was resumed. Finland was quite dependent on its trade with the East, so the cutoff was damaging.

And Kekkonen was then elected. He was an agrarian, a leader of a party now called the Center Party. The President of Finland at that time had considerable power, not least in foreign affairs. He played a hand that was suspect by some Finns, not by others, but he was determined to have a good relationship with the Soviet leadership, and he went to great effort to do that. In my opinion, he was probably gauging it right, that he could somehow convince them that Finland was not a threat to them, and so they would just leave Finland alone. And it worked reasonably well for Finland. There was a lot of hue and cry in the opposition parties, particularly on the right and to some extent by the Socialists, that he was pandering to the Russians, that there was too much influence at other levels in the society that the Russians, not the Soviet embassy, but in general the Russians were doing in peace movements, and things like the nuclear free-zone movements. So, he operated under that shadow for a good bit of his long presidency, in a sense. There was always that nagging feeling among certain Western embassies, that he was selling out to the Soviets. We, however, in the political section were not monolithic as to this thesis, and sometimes were able to temper the official position of the U.S. embassy as dictated by the politically appointed ambassadors that Finland was on a slippery slope and that the Finns were drifting slowly but surely into the Soviet orbit. There was, indeed, self-censorship in Finland, there was no question about it. The biggest dailies were very careful, quite careful, to not to offend, unduly offend, the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, there was, at the Embassy, a genuine respect for Finland's geopolitical situation, and no desire to roil the waters. This attitude prevailed in Washington, as expounded in the occasional NSC pronouncement on policy vis-à-vis the Nordics.

Q. How did Kekkonen view the U.S.

SELLIN: Well, I can't say that he was inimical to us, in any way. I don't recall any particular affront. A couple of times he was approached by us to see if he would be interested or if the country would be interested in some kind of emergency aid, especially at crucial times, which I will mention soon. And he said no. The Finns could do it on their own. Thank you, but no thanks.

So he did try to keep the West, if not at bay, somewhat at arms length. He was quite independent in a sense, and would do things, try to keep a kind of balance. And it was interesting in one regard, because Finland was a late member... came late to the United Nations, in 1956. And that was considered a real coup, because even though the Soviet reparations payments were completed and the Soviets had left the Porkkala base that they had occupied after the war to the west of Helsinki, such a move toward the West was considered by Finns at the time to be quite daring. He also made at least one or two state visits to the United States, the first one in November 1961, at the time of the biggest post-war crisis Finland suffered, from Soviet pressure, which I'll come to in a minute. He was actually in the United States on this visit when the Soviets delivered their infamous note calling for consultation with the Finns on a perceived German threat, which the 1948 treaty of friendship and mutual admiration, I used to call it, specifically stated that if either country perceived a threat to themselves or the Soviet Union through the other country - this is not the exact wording - they would consult so they would see how they could best deal with this threat. The Soviets signaled to the Finns that they had observed a German threat in the Baltic. The reason for that, or the claimed reason, was the creation of a NATO Baltic Command with Germans in it. Anyhow, basically, this note created quite a tizzy in Finland, understandably. Kekkonen was actually in Hawaii having completed his official duties in Washington and elsewhere and out in the beach the last day or two. And he continued his trip. He didn't come home right away. He sent back the Foreign Minister who was with him, and stayed on a couple of days to kind of calm the waters. Of course that whole situation has resulted in a lot of speculation as to whether it was a put up job or not, because prior to the note, which was delivered in the end of November of 1961, three months prior to Kekkonen's first re-election bid. His first 6-year term was expiring. The Social Democrats had got their act together and were forming a coalition with other opposition parties to elect a single candidate. So they put up a very highly respected supreme court judge whose name was Olavi Honka. I think if anything he was probably a conservative, but he was going to be the Social Democratic coalition, for want of a better word, candidate. And he was doing pretty well, and in fact, I would say that the Social Democrats smelled blood. They really thought they had Kekkonen licked. And I think he thought so, too. So the consequence of this note crisis, of the presentation of this note, was that Kekkonen came home, made a private trip to Novosibirsk, where he met with Khrushchev. He had one of his advisers with him, the foreign ministry's Max Jakobson, who later became ambassador to the United Nations and was a serious candidate for the Secretary Generalship, and lost. They were the only two Finns present, the President actually talking to Khrushchev only with the Russian interpreter. He comes back to Finland, not to worry, he said he convinced K. that he was keeping a close eye out and no need for consultations now. Much to the relief of Finns because everyone knew that once they got involved with consultations that that would mean more than cooperation in military matters, joint maneuvers, things like that.

But the other consequence of this was that the Social Democratic coalition, realizing what the situation was, fell apart. So in the last month or so before the elections, which I think were in February or early March, all these parties had to scramble around and find new party candidates. And running against a field of half a dozen opposition candidates, Kekkonen won handily and so the Russians kept their man in the presidency.

Q: Yes.

SELLIN: And he never lost an election later. So that was quite an exciting period. And then the other big event that I recall during my tour there was the communist world youth extravaganza, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) festival.

Q: Oh, yes.

SELLIN: And it was the first time it had ever been held in a country outside the Iron Curtain. And that was considered to be a step in the wrong direction for Finland. We wrinkled our nose at that a little bit. There was determined effort in which the U.S. put a lot of effort and money into screwing that one up, and we succeeded, essentially. They had mobilized students... I say "they..." We knew the whole right wing of the political spectrum and the Social Democrats weren't that happy with the festival either, so there was a concerted effort to foul it up. And it happened. The delegates weren't allowed to stay in town. They had to put them out in sort of suburban camps and bus them into town for events. We brought various people. Jimmy Jufree was there playing in a nightclub. Gloria Steinem, who was a gorgeous young woman then (as now), a student, came out to work on the students, and she did wow them. The Finnish anti-festival activity was amazing, and it was the last time an effort was made to hold the festival outside the Soviet bloc.

Q: Were there many defections from that?

SELLIN: I don't know. I mean, frankly, I was not there for the finale. I had to go to a labor conference in Rome, so I missed the last couple of days...

Q: I remember in Germany, we had those things in East Berlin, and their were always defections, federation youth.

SELLIN: I'm sure. There very well may have been. But there were other defections from other cultural events that the Soviets, the Eastern Europeans were trying put up. A whole shipload of them once, coming from East Germany [laughter].

Q: [laughter].

SELLIN: In the old *Stockholm*, incidentally. It was the rebuilt Swedish-American line *Stockholm* that had sunk the *Andrea Doria* outside New York that was sold and eventually wound up in East Germany as the *Völkerfreundshaft*, but it was the old *Stockholm* that was ferrying all these kids, delegates, over to some kind of meeting in Finland, and they got off the boat and disappeared.

Q: Suddenly they went somewhere else, eh? I wanted to note that you served under what...four ambassadors in that time?

SELLIN: Actually five.

Q: Five.

SELLIN: Five. It was a very interesting period, and very quick turnover. You had first of all the Republicans, Nixon was there in, was it '59?

Q: Yes.

SELLIN: Career diplomat John D. Hickerson was there when I arrived. He was transferred six months later to the Philippines. Roy Melbourne arrived as DCM and served as Charge for some months until there arrived Edson O. Sessions, a political appointment.

Q: Sessions.

SELLIN: Yes, he was a former deputy postmaster general. Quite conservative. He was there for a rather short time. But he did one thing that no FSO would have thought of. In a brain-storming meeting about what we could do to help Finland, he suggested a U.S. postage stamp. And six months later a Champion of Liberty stamp with Mannerheim's profile was issued, with traction that lasted for years. For example, LBJ on his visit as VP in 1963 gave the Finnish president the original plates from which they were printed. After Kennedy was elected, Sessions of course left.

Q: A change of administration.

SELLIN: A change of administration, sure. So he left and we again had a charge for quite a while, and then Bernard Gufler, a career officer, arrived. And he was there for about a year and a half. And he was also very conservative.

Q: Oh, yes. I knew Gufler in Berlin.

SELLIN: Well he had a sculpture of the Bear of Berlin on his desk. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] I'm sure of that.

SELLIN: So I actually served under him for a period. And then he was removed to make way for Carl T. Rowen, who was actually there only eight months. He was there during the biggest official visit that had ever occurred, at least in my time in Finland, when Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson came through in September, 1963. Rowen had previously traveled with the VP in India and elsewhere when he was with Public Affairs in the Department and Johnson was a great admirer of his. The Johnson visit, however, was a mixed-bag. And that's a whole other chapter. In any case, his visit damaged our relations with the Finnish apparatchiks for at least six months. They were so fed up with the way, the mechanics, of how the visit was handled.

Q: With how Johnson behaved?

SELLIN: Well, partly his behavior and also the sort of demands, some really quite silly, that we were forced to make.

Q: Demands, yes...

SELLIN: Through the advance parties, and total lack of any kind of cohesion in what was wanted, and wants were constantly changing. We worked weekends, we worked full time for months because every time we would prepare something they would task, we'd send it in, and they'd say, "Well, no, we'd like you to do it this way instead." And this went on and on. And then through the visit. It was really a big sigh of relief when we waved off that plane. I guarantee it. It did take a while to get back on an even keel, because we really ran roughshod over the Finns in that one.

But then, of course, Kennedy was assassinated two months later. And Carl Rowen was called back to become head of the USIA. So he was there only eight months, and then we had a charge for a long time, and then came. Tyler Thompson, also a career diplomat, making him the fifth Ambassador I served under in 5 plus years in Finland.

Q: I remember Rowan was carrying out what was known as a vigorous diplomacy when he was there. I gather he was getting around making speeches.

SELLIN: Well, he was, and he was very sure of himself. He was only 38. The Finns were very interested. But, I guess he spoke, as I guess anyone does coming out of one job, he spoke about his previous job in global terms, and the Finns enjoyed it. But he wasn't really there long enough to make any serious impression. Nice guy, though, one must admit. I had not wanted to mix my private life and business life in Finland. But He saw me walking along the street one day near the Embassy with my Finnish girlfriend and when he later asked who it was and I told him, he said, "She's on my guest list from now on." So, thereafter, every time he invited me to something, she'd come too. [laughter] So, after we were married and I had brought her to Washington he got wind of a party I was organizing to introduce her to my friends - not inviting him, assuming he would be too busy as USIA Director - he learned about it and insisted upon coming to the party. His presence caught the attention of the neighborhood in Southeast Washington where we lived and we were minor celebrities for a while. So, anyhow, we were talking about those events.

Q: I was going to ask, as you left Finland, were you confident in your mind, Ted, that the Finns could uphold their neutrality? Or was the Russian strength so...

SELLIN: Basically yes. Both I and my boss were...

Q: Who was your boss, by the way?

SELLIN: Harvey Nelson, who later went on to greater heights specializing in African affairs. Became ambassador to Botswana, Lesotho in Southern Africa. Anyhow, during that whole period, particularly under Gufler, he and I were fighting a losing battle. I don't want to speak for

him specifically, but we were trying to tone down the reports that were going in from us, but Guffler insisted on editing and writing, and he would clear every single cable that went out. This was before we had all regs for classification authority signature and so on. Which I thought was unusual. And we'd find out later that some of the things that we had written had been edited to give them a more reactionary bias. Recently Kekkonen's dairy has been published and he characterized Gufler as "hullu" which means crazy.

And I hadn't realized until I got into the post-retirement work with the Freedom of Information Act where I began to see some of the cables that he sent through privileged channels what he was doing. I mean he was not following our party line. He thought the Finns were goners succumbing to Soviet pressures. Contrarily, I really did believe that they were dealing with it. The Russians could put pressure on them, they got through the note crisis of 1961 that guaranteed Kekkonen's presidency, but they were still essentially independent. The other thing is that we rarely mentioned the word "neutral" as applied to Finland, and they were trying very hard to get communiqués that would say we supported Finland's neutrality. Well, we eventually did. In the early days, when I was still there, that was a hard nut to crack. And the Soviets were not that anxious to put it in their communiqués either, after meetings. But, no, I really felt... admittedly, I was leaving when the labor movement was still in disarray that the Finns would prevail. My successor spent four or five years reporting on the upswing in the situation... I was reporting the downswing, and he was reporting the upswing and the eventual resolution of the problem, to everyone's delight. I was quite ready to believe, and did believe, that Finland would muddle through, they always had, and they did. In retrospect, I think that our political section position was more balanced than that of our superiors.

Q: How strong a pull did the Swedes have on the Finns?

SELLIN: Well, I don't think that they did. I have to say this, for example, when the note crisis evolved... I had a Swedish aunt, now deceased, and I spoke to her. In fact, I was in Sweden briefly, and I spoke to her. She was a conservative politician and had run for Parliament a few times. Anyhow, if she were any reflection, the Swedes were scared witless. This view was also expressed in the media and in public debate. They were sure that Finland was going to go down the tubes and they would have a common border with a Soviet satellite.. And conversely I think the Finns were happy to have a neutral country on their Western border. I think they would have been quite alarmed had Sweden joined NATO, for example. Of course, the Norwegian border skirts Finland and Russia a little bit in the north, but that, I guess wasn't enough to alarm the Finns.

Q: That's so frozen up there that they don't notice it...

SELLIN: So in that respect, I think there was some interest in Swedish affairs. Of course, all the trade unions, other organizations, were interlinked in a sense in the Nordic area. Well, the Nordic Council of parliamentarians had some trade union members in it, there was a common labor market in the Nordic countries, and of course, there was a huge Finnish migration, which started in the mid-'50s, to Sweden. At its high point, there was something of 500,000 Finns living and working in Sweden. Sweden then had a population of 7 million, so it was the largest single chunk of migrant workers in Sweden at that time. So there was that kind of connection. A lot of

those Finns stayed on; a lot of them came back when conditions improved in Finland in the period that I was there. But it was huge.

Politically, the political parties were all collaborating with each other in various ways. So, yes, it meant something, but I think basically they were just pleased they were neutral and that was the extent of that.

Q: Yes. Then, when your four years in Oslo were over, you were gone back to Helsinki, after a seven year hiatus.

SELLIN: Yes, that came as a surprise.

Q: Tell me how that came about.

SELLIN: Well that occurred by pure chance. By that time I'd married a Finnish girl. I had no expectations that they would send me back. But a gentleman who was political counselor was leaving early, he'd shortened a four-year tour to a two-year tour and State didn't have anybody in the pipeline. That was essentially it. So I was directly transferred from Oslo to Helsinki to fill out his 2-year tour. Of course, when the end of those two years came, I did my damndest to try to extend it for a year or so because my young son was then getting to know his grandparents in Finland. But it didn't work. By that time they already had somebody in the pipeline, in fact, a native speaker of Finnish who was coming online. So that tour lasted two years, but they were two extremely interesting years. Kekkonen was still president. One of the things that happened that we were quite concerned about was an effort made by the center party and by the foreign minister to engineer a vote in parliament that would extend Kekkonen's term of office. He was coming up on an election, not immediately, but two years later. And they expected there would be another brouhaha at that election. The party managed to convince enough parliamentarians to vote an extension of his term, I forget now whether it was two years or four years. We were quite aghast at that notion that a democracy would be manipulated that way. But it worked, it passed, and he stayed on.

I should mention that the Salt 1 talks had been going on intermittently in Helsinki starting in 1969, and were conducted there and in Vienna until 1972. While some of the meetings took place in the Embassy, it was an entirely independent operation. The only way I knew they were meeting there was when a Marine guard blocked my access to the hall where the men's room was located. Even Ambassador Petersen didn't want any briefings on the talks for fear of misspeaking in public. But the Finns were extremely proud of their first venture into providing a venue for Super Power negotiations.

The other things that were going that were very interesting at that time and that I got involved in... One was a preparatory committee meeting on the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. So that took place during the two years. I was a member of the delegation. I was, among other things, liaison with the other Nordic delegations. That was ancillary to my regular job as politic counselor. And when the closing session of the preliminary

phase took place that summer of 1972, all the foreign ministers of the CSCE countries gathered in Helsinki. That was quite an event. Secretary William Rodgers came in...

Q: Yes, I was going to ask if he came.

SELLIN: He did indeed. Then the delegations disappeared to Geneva to set up the full plenary for the CSCE, but my work was done.. At the time, the consensus was that there would not be a secretariat or an organization for the particular agreement that had been created, the Final Act creating the CSCE. That was signed in Helsinki in 1975 with all the Heads of State of the participating countries present. I must admit I would have liked to have been present then, but I was already involved elsewhere. As you know, the need for an organization eventually became apparent, and there is now something called the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Q: Yes.

SELLIN: Early on the periodic conferences, in Madrid and in Belgrade, among others, were quite confrontational, unwieldy and also increasingly tasking members. So an administrative body was needed for follow-up, etc.

Q: They met in various European countries.

SELLIN: I forget where they established the office, but I think the headquarters is now in Vienna, I think, I'm not sure. Is it?

Q: I'm not sure either.

SELLIN: So that was one of the important events that occurred. That was, for me, a very interesting experience because I'd never participated in anything like it, even when I was in OIC, I was then a secretary to the delegation. I wasn't part of the policymaking group. So the CSCE was a good learning experience.

Another thing was the Ostpolitik of the West Germans and the establishment of Finnish relations with East and West Germany. Full relations. East Germany had only had a trade mission in Helsinki. The West Germans had an embassy, as I recall, by that time. This regularized relations with both foreign countries. It was quite a... for me personally it was a telling illustration of who's on the inside track. I had lunch with a young Swedish diplomat, a woman who went on to much bigger and greater things in the Swedish Foreign Service, she was a junior officer at the Swedish embassy in Helsinki, which has a very dominant location on the inner harbor, an old mansion there. In the course of this luncheon, she asked me if I were going to the press conference. And I said, "No I hadn't even heard about it." It turns out that the Finnish foreign office had called a press conference for the foreign press and the Finnish press to announce the arrangements for the recognition of the two countries and the regularization of their relations. So I called over to the press office and I said, "What's all this about?" This is after lunch and it was going to be 3 in the afternoon. They said, "Well we are briefing the press on the new relations." The upshot of it was I told them I was coming to that. They said, "well, well, well." There they

had everything prepared in three languages, they had the documents and all of the exchanges of notes and everything else, in English translation. I was really ticked off because this is the kind of thing that would have helped all the diplomats. As it was, I got what I needed, but I had to claw for it.

Q: Had they notified our USIA people they were having a press conference?

SELLIN: I don't think so. They would have told me. I just recall that was strange.

Q: That was a bad oversight or a mistake on their part.

SELLIN: I think it was a lack of understanding of what the Western governments would think of the move. Something similar had happened a bit earlier, when a Finnish press contact told me about a press conference the Foreign Ministry was holding to inform the Finnish domestic press about the how to deal positively with the spreading, and invidious, notion of "Finlandization," a perception from abroad that Finland was slowly being sucked into the Soviet orbit. I attended, but at the very least the public affairs officers of Embassies, both East and West, should have been invited to something so important. So there was a lot going on as Finland worked to establish a reputation as a player in the international arena. Two fascinating years.

Q: Oh, yes. I was going to say, exciting. Now, did Vietnam play any role there?

SELLIN: To some extent, yes. The ambassador then was Val Peterson, former Governor of Nebraska who had been ambassador to Denmark earlier, much earlier, who was not really a happy camper in Helsinki. He never quite understood the Finns, in my opinion. At his staff meetings, he often reminisced as though the sun rose and set on Denmark, that was his mantra. He had some friend there who had an estate and farm that he'd visit from time to time. He was very tough on what he considered to be the Finnish press and its "propaganda" that he felt was very anti-American during the Vietnam War, a view that I felt was exaggerated.

In fact, he forced me to join him to go to the foreign office one day to lower the boom on the Finns when the education minister, a young man, in fact one of the youngest ministers ever in Finland, Ulf Sundqvist, a Social Democrat, was carrying on about the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi at a pro-Vietnam rally. He was a minister of the government. We went in spitting fire... and the foreign minister, Ahti Karjalainen, the long-time but waning heir apparent to President Kekkonen but who never even made it, he, very unflappable, said, "Well, he's not speaking as a member of the government... he's speaking as a member of the Social Democratic Party." And yes, there were also some demonstrations during the Vietnam period, but the Finnish police were well in control. Basically, the anti-Vietnam sentiment there was muted. Ambassador Val Peterson was sure a bomb was going to come through the window of his office, which was in a first floor corner of the building. He was quite alarmed by that prospect.

Q: He was in Denmark in the late '50s and if he'd gone back in these years in Copenhagen I think he'd had a slightly different impression because their reaction was very strong.

SELLIN: There was an upswell in 1972. The basic concern, both then and in my earlier tour of duty, expressed by our ambassadors was that local news portrayal of the U.S. in Vietnam, especially the TV news, was slanted. They took umbrage at that, and so did we in the political section. So there were complaints. At a later stage, I wasn't there although I knew the man, Mark Evans Austad, was ambassador (and later on to Norway), and he took the complaint to the people. As a pioneer TV anchorman, he actually got time on Tampere city's TV, it's broadcast nationally, to counter some of bias in the Finnish national TV/radio which he considered unfair, especially since there were government people on the broadcast boards. I never heard his commentary, but he apparently lit into the Soviets with his take on bias in the Finnish media. He got a lot of kudos from the Finns who thought for once the Americans were speaking out, standing up, not taking it on the chin and scoring important points.

The result was that the Russian ambassador insisted on equal time. So he got on the TV too. It was an unusual interlude. It was a rarity because we tended to... our basic policy there throughout the years was not to stir or roil the waters for the Finns. Don't do anything that is going to get them in trouble with the Russians. Every now and then we'd poke our head up a little bit. We would request a naval ship visit and the Finns would say, "Well, not in Helsinki, why don't you put it down in the far West coast?" And when we remonstrated, the Finns would say, "Well, if we give you... then we've got to give the Russians one." And every now and then, we'd say, "So what! We would love to bring the ship up into Helsinki and fly the flag." And they would then acquiesce.

Q: Having been away, Ted, for seven years, did you notice whether their relations with the Russians had changed or not? Kekkonen had been in all this period...

SELLIN: Yes. It certainly seemed so to me at that time. There were still vestiges of Soviet influence. One thing that came out later, and I wasn't a party to it, was the fact that, and these are in memoirs that were written by former Russian ambassadors and KGB agents, whatever they call them... residents... in Helsinki. They are actually published memoirs, illustrating how close they tried to cozy up to Kekkonen, and had some influence. But, at one point, Kekkonen kicked out the Russian ambassador because he was blatantly meddling in domestic politics when trying to do some financing, putting money into the faction of the Finnish Communist party amenable to the Soviets. This was later. As I mentioned, Khrushchev and Brezhnev didn't do it, but some of the, I forget who the party secretary was then in Moscow, perhaps Andropov, did meddle a bit. So Kekkonen would draw a line in that way. Then he would balance it with some throw away to the Russians. The Saimaa Canal improvement, mostly in post-war Russian Karelia but financed by Finland, was one trade-off. Or he'd agree to buy a squadron of MIGs. But where are they going now? They went from MIGs to the Swedish second-hand used Dragon jet, and now they have bought some 60 American F-18s.

Q: The Finns have... I didn't know that.

SELLIN: Yes. They went with the Americans. One of the interesting sidelights... this happened last summer when I was there for a visit. I didn't attend, but they de-commissioned the last MIG squadron that had been flying all these years. They de-commissioned it and the pilots were

extremely unhappy because they were too old to be reschooled in the F-18s. So, they were going from MIGs to a desk job.

Q: And the Swedes couldn't be very happy, or the Saab company.

SELLIN: No, that's right.

Q: Now, it was in those years that we used to hear a lot of talk about something called, "Finlandization..."

SELLIN: Oh, gosh.

Q: And Western Europe was very worried and we were more worried in Washington that Finlandization would creep into Western Europe.

SELLIN: True. I touched on that earlier. I attended a couple of press conferences in Helsinki, after I had made my noise about that, in which the foreign ministry was explaining to the Finnish press, not the foreign press, but the Finnish press from all over the country, what Finlandization was all about. It was quite interesting, because they were trying to put a very good spin on the use of the word "Finlandization" which was gaining ground all over the world as the perfect example of how a country becomes almost a satellite and eventually will become a satellite. This was the way this notion was expressed in various foreign journals and it caught on. The Ministry spokesman was trying to explain to the Finnish press that this doesn't mean that at all, it means cooperation with a neighbor, it is a two-way street, an example of successful cohabitation of two differing political ideologies. But it did bother the Finns a lot. They really didn't like to be categorized in that way, or that the phenomenon that it was supposed to describe was applied to them. And correctly so, I don't think they were... and I forget who had actually coined the phrase. I think it was French journalist. I'd have to look that up. But it was not...

Q: But it spread all over.

SELLIN: It surely did. As time has shown, the Finns, I think in general, the Finns played it very cool throughout the postwar period. Some people tended to forget, especially as time went on, and Finland began to look so prosperous, which it is today, in material ways, although the economy has had its ups and downs. But they started in 1945 with a huge reparations debt to the Soviets. People tend to forget that they really went from ground zero, the armistice in 1944, to having survived the Soviet Union. And they kept themselves free of life-threatening entanglements with the Soviets for the 40-odd years it was a Super Power on tiny Finland's border. And I think that is really remarkable.

Q: One other thing that I wanted to mention was in those years you were there, they were having some difficulty with the free trade agreement with a common market. Do you recall that? The common market was trying to entice Finland, I believe...

SELLIN: Yes, I was, and that of course went back so far, to retrogress a little bit... When I was on my way to Finland in 1959, there was a meeting going on in Stockholm. I happened to stop in

Stockholm for a couple of days to see my relatives there. There was a meeting going on in a famous hotel at one of the seaside resorts outside of Stockholm. Very hush-hush. It was Finland's negotiations with EFTA, the European Free Trade Association, made up of non-OEEC countries, to determine if they could become somehow associated... and this was a big deal. This was one of those moments where they reached out to the West. First they joined the UN, then they were trying to join EFTA. Eventually they did, the negotiations went on for a year or two. This initial meeting was very top-secret, there in Sweden. And they finally then did indeed become an Associate Member of AFTA. So that deal was signed, and then Finland joined the Soviet bloc COMECON. Part of the balancing act. And then they joined OECD in 1968.

Q: Oh, I forgot they joined ComeCon.

SELLIN: But in fact, that didn't really mean a hell of a lot because they were all... the trade between Russia and Finland was barter. That was the story they put out, that this was just a fig leaf, don't worry about it. EFTA's what really mattered. An important link to Western organizations was what they were looking for. Of course, I'm not sure COMECON still exists. I guess it disappeared along with everything else.

Q: Yes. [laughter]

SELLIN: And then at some point, this was after I'd left, the Russians stopped barter trade with the Finns and others. This applied also to oil, and so Finland suddenly found itself paying world market rates for oil.

Q: Hard currency.

SELLIN: That was quite a bite in their economy at the time.

Q: Those were two very interesting years in Helsinki, and then it was back to the department.

HARVEY F. NELSON JR.
Director, Office for Sweden, Finland, and Iceland
Washington, DC (1959-1961)

Political Counselor
Helsinki (1961-1964)

Ambassador Nelson was born and raised in California. He was educated at Occidental College, the University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Navy and teaching at Bowdoin College, Ambassador Nelson joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad, primarily as a political officer dealing in Scandinavian and African affairs. In 1985 he was appointed Ambassador to Swaziland.

Q: Did the Finns show any bias toward Soviet positions or were they really neutral?

NELSON: I don't think they took the Soviet side to the extent they could. I think we had some problems with some of their votes in the UN, but we understood that they had to behave with a certain amount of caution. They still had Soviet troops occupying the Porkkala Peninsula. If a Finn wished to transit this peninsula, he or she had to do it in a closed train car. They also were paying very heavy reparations to the Soviets and were forced to produce certain equipment for the USSR. They certainly could not look forward to a secure future. If a war had broken out between East and West they would have been caught in the middle. This is a situation that lasted for several decades including the time we served in Finland. The occupation of Finnish territory had ceased by that time, but they still had to tread carefully.

Finland was of concern to us during the 1959-61 period. It had a very large communist party - about one-third of the electorate - and any opportunity for Soviet intervention worried us. Of course, we were super-worriers about the communist threat in this period. In retrospect, a lot of our concern looks pretty ridiculous, but at the time, we were worried about events in Finland.

Finland was receiving assistance from the U.S. During this period, the Finns had an election. The communists made some gains in parliamentary seats. I had just landed on the desk after my year at Indiana University. I was told to attend a conference on the subject of assistance to Eastern Europe, including Finland. I was very surprised by being asked to do this and was totally unprepared. When it came to discuss assistance to Finland, I was asked why assistance should be continued when so many Finns seem to be supporting the communists. There was a question of whether our assistance had not been a colossal failure. I responded, for the lack of anything else to say, that we should just imagine where Finland would be now if there had not been any U.S. assistance. But we terminated the assistance program a couple of years later. Finland in any case did not really meet the criteria for an aid recipient country. But we did worry about Finland, not only in the bureau, but at higher levels as well. It was hard to make the case that assistance was justified when many Finns seemed to be supporting our enemy.

Q: You were on the desk when Kennedy was elected. How did you view this change in administration?

NELSON: We supported it wholeheartedly. The blind fear of communism had been the mantra of previous administrations. Of course, that is easier realized today than it was then. But I think instinctively we thought that it was time for a new look at the world. We thought and hoped that Kennedy might provide that. In fact, there was not that much change, but we had hopes at the beginning of the new administration. So we were quite pleased with the election outcome. It was an unusual reawakening which we had not experienced in the deadly early post-war years.

Q: What was your next assignment in 1961?

NELSON: I was assigned to Helsinki as political counselor and I was there until 1964. It was a natural assignment in light of my Finnish language school three years earlier and my tour on a Scandinavian desk, which handled Finnish affairs.

Q: *What was Finland like in 1961?*

NELSON: It was closely tied to the Soviet Union. It was still paying reparations which accounted in part for their poor standard of living. They worked very hard to meet their obligations they incurred in their peace agreement with the USSR. The Soviets still occupied part of Finland. The Finns suffered great fuel shortages. In the squares of many towns there were mounds of trees that the people could use for heating and cooking. So the Finns were managing, but it certainly was not a comfortable living. Their conditions were improving slowly. It was during our tour that the Soviets began their withdrawal.

We were very nervous because the Cold War was quite evident. As I said earlier, we were concerned by the close Finland-USSR relationships. In part we did not appreciate that the Finns in fact had not much choice. The president was Urho Kekkonen, who was a very skillful politician. He had grown up on a farm but had found his way into political life. In retrospect, I think he was quite skillful on how he handled the Russians. At the time, he occasionally made us very nervous.

Internally, the Finns were working very hard to overcome the problems which had been imposed on them. They tried very hard to keep their peace with the Soviets.

Q: *Who was your ambassador?*

NELSON: I think it was Edson Sessions, who had been the deputy postmaster general or something like that. He was replaced in 1961 by Bernard Gufler. Sessions was a decent ambassador. We didn't have a particularly prominent role in Finland.

Gufler was a career Foreign Service officer. He stayed for about two years when he was replaced by Carl Rowan, who has just passed away. Gufler was not well treated; he was a difficult person, but he was treated rather shabbily by the Department. He learned that he was going to be replaced through the newspapers. That does happen periodically, but it is not the way to run a railroad. He was obviously unhappy and I think he retired after his Helsinki assignment. I did see him later in the Department, but I don't know what he was doing there.

I learned how to write from Bernard Gufler. I thought I was a pretty good writer, but I learned from him how to communicate well with the Department. I appreciated what he taught me. When I drafted my reports, he would call me in and go over the text with a fine tooth comb, trying to make it more meaningful. He took the time to teach me. I have read some of my reports several years later and I must say that they read well. I could clearly see the Gufler influence. So I was very appreciative of Gufler's teachings.

He also got me interested in Urho Kekkonen whom I studied and on whom I wrote some good reports. I came to appreciate the difficult path that he was trying to follow. So I had a good relationship with Gufler. He wanted to be "one of the boys." He started by asking us to address him as "Guf." You can be sure that didn't happen, except once. We had a press attaché who had too much to drink one day. We were seeing someone off at the airport and he entered the VIP

waiting room and said: "Hi there, Guf!" The rest of us just sank in our seats trying to hide. Soon, he became aware of the gaff, but we never let him forget it.

Then came Carl Rowan, an African-American. He stayed for ten months. It was a very interesting period. I have a very special place in my heart for Carl Rowan. He was a guy who came up the hard way. He had no help from anyone. But he persevered against odds that none of us can really imagine in a period when prejudice against blacks was quite acceptable. He did extraordinarily well. He was very close to LBJ (Lyndon Baines Johnson). He got the Vice President to make a tour of Scandinavia - Sweden, Iceland, Finland and Norway. It utterly exhausted LBJ.

During the ten months of Rowan's stewardship, we had a fascinating time. The Finns were astounded that we would send a black ambassador. Rowan was both colorful and decent. He was a journalist. I think he came from Tennessee and fought his way up the ladder, against all of the odds that African-Americans faced. We didn't have affirmative action in those days. I am not sure that he would have used that process in any case. I think he would have been more likely to do it his way. He just made the system work for him.

It was a very active period, with great emphasis on public relations. The LBJ visit was certainly an opportunity for that. The naval attaché in Stockholm had a white Cadillac convertible. Rowan managed to have the car flown to Finland for the Johnson visit. The Finns responded by giving Johnson a ticker-tape parade on the main street in Helsinki! It was a very strange experience. I think it is well known that the Kennedy White House encouraged LBJ's travels and Rowan might have been in cahoots with the White House in pushing this visit; I don't know.

Q: Did you brief Vice President Johnson?

NELSON: Rowan did that. I saw Johnson and worked a lot on the speeches he was to deliver. He had speech writers with him who I thought were awful and wrote inappropriate drafts. We had a hard time getting LBJ to fish in his pocket to get out the right note cards. On some occasions, he did not pull out the right cards. He gave a very bad speech at a sacred graveyard on the Arctic Circle. The Finns first had to fight the Russians and then the Germans who wouldn't leave the country voluntarily. So the graveyard was sacred territory and unfortunately LBJ pulled out the wrong cards giving a speech which had little to do with the surroundings. It did not go over very well.

LBJ was tired by this time. Lady Bird was with him. She was a magnificent human being. He was petulant and acted like a spoiled brat. He was very difficult to deal with. The Finn press was not very kind to him, despite all our efforts from the control room. He refused to do some things that had been part of the mutually agreed schedule. But Lady Bird filled in behind him; she was great. My wife got along very well with Lady Bird. Rowan would turn to me and ask me to fix something with Mrs. Johnson. My wife did that; we were very lucky that we had Lady Bird's cooperation.

In general, I think it was a successful trip. The Johnsons were in Finland for three days. He really covered the country in that short a span. One night, while I was in the control room, at about 2

a.m. my wife visited. We lived outside of town on the Baltic; we had four kids. She was clutching a bunch of pillows. I asked her what she was doing. She said she was bringing some pillows for "your God-damned Vice President." He hadn't liked the pillows that had been provided and somebody knew we had the kind of pillows he liked. So they called our house and asked my wife to bring her pillows, which is what she did. I will never forget that moment.

LBJ had his Texas steaks and his Cutty Sark whisky - all which came on his plane. He was difficult and petulant. We went to a large city on the Arctic Circle. The Finns put on a show for the American party - a deer roundup and a presentation of the Lapps in their colorful garb. After Johnson returned to Helsinki, I stayed behind to put the pieces all together. The Lapps who had paraded in their costumes and with their sleds, went into the woods and came out in daily wear driving Mercedes to get back home. That was amusing! The National Geographic covered this part of the Vice President's trip.

Q: You said that you studied the Finnish president. How did you interpret his positions vis-a-vis the East and the West?

NELSON: I didn't feel as nervous about Kekkonen as Washington did. The Finnish views were not a major preoccupation in the Department, but some people there worried. As I said before, the communist party was pretty strong in Finland - it had about 1/3 of the vote. That party was headed by the daughter of a former member of the Soviet Politburo. He had stayed on the Politburo until his death. So if someone worried about communist parties, the Finnish one posed a challenge. It must be said that Finns are all nationalist and that went for the communists as well. They, however, fully supported the Soviet Union unless it threatened Finnish independence. They supported Moscow even though Stalin and his successors understood that the Soviets could have Finland whenever they wanted. They tried at a very heavy price - The Winter War - but they pretty much controlled the country. There is a play entitled The Unknown Soldier which depicted the situation pretty well. Our oldest son went to Finnish school and that was his favorite play. I might note that he was the head of his Finnish class even though this was his first foreign language.

In that play, the troops have some political arguments. It made quite clear that the Finnish communists are first of all very nationalistic, although there were times when this position put them in very difficult straits caught between their compatriots and the Soviets. They had to fight the Soviets and still maintain their loyalty to the communist cause. This periodic dilemma made it interesting to watch the Finnish communists. I must say that the party chief was a very strong person and very articulate. We had a little contact with her; not very much. I met with her on a couple of occasions. She was very effective on the floor of parliament. She was tolerated by her Finnish colleagues who appreciated her skills and intellect, even if they did not agree with her views. In retrospect, I probably should have been more active in meeting with her, even though my masters might well have been very unhappy if I had done so. Throughout the world, we were not communicating with communists. That probably was a very short sighted policy.

I remember that I used to drive the North Korean representatives in Helsinki nuts. I would go over to them and try to shake hands with them and they would run away as fast as they could. They didn't know what to do. Of course, I was also breaching protocol to some extent.

Q: Of course, you would not have been sent back to North Korea. Were we looking for potential splits between the Finnish communists and the Soviet Union?

NELSON: I don't think we were sufficiently sophisticated to undertake such a mission. I think in general our view was that the party was going to follow the directives of the Politburo regardless of any other points of view.

Q: How were our contacts with Kekkonen and how did he manage the East-West conflict?

NELSON: His view was that Finland's most important relationship by far was with the Soviet Union. He didn't want to upset the West, but he was not going to spend sleepless nights worrying about our views. His first priority was to keep the Soviets happy. There was one incident when I was in Sweden. Kekkonen was summoned to the Kremlin, and he went in a hurry. That bothered us a lot. He struck some kind of agreement which did not sit too well with us. But the Soviets had the right, as I indicated earlier, under the peace agreement to take over the country or parts of it. Kekkonen of course did everything he could to prevent such Soviet action. Eventually, he hoped they would leave all Finnish territory, which eventually they did because no purpose was being served by a continuing occupation.

Kekkonen would have liked to be friends with the West but could not jeopardize relations with the Soviets. He was very realistic about Finland's situation and could not forget that Finland had been part of Russia at one stage in its history.

Q: As I remember, this was a very tense period during which the Berlin Wall was built and the Cuban missile crisis in October, 1962. Did we try to use these events to sway the Finns towards us?

NELSON: We just watched. We did not have a pro-active policy vis-a-vis the Finns. I think we all understood their situation and thought that any efforts to move Finland from its pro-Soviet stance was bound to fail. Our ambassadors talked to Kekkonen on a number of occasions. He was always available for them, but no argument that we presented could sway him from his course. I think the Finns did become quite anxious about these developments which just heightened East-West tensions. There was some concern about nuclear fall out hitting our residences. I can remember storing water in our basement and trying to seal our windows. We were down wind from the Soviet Union and felt threatened about nuclear debris being blown our way. The Soviets were testing their bombs in the Arctic Sea not too far away, which did produce some fall out over Finland.

Our diplomatic efforts were essentially limited to staying in touch with the Finns. The Soviets were also very active. At one time, they tried to subvert my wife. They thought they saw a relationship developing between one of their agents and my wife. They tried to take advantage of that, but they didn't get very far. My wife spotted their efforts right away.

Q: As political counselor, how did you deal with your counterparts in the Foreign Office?

NELSON: There was nothing unusual about that relationship. It was close. We used to have very open and frank discussions. They were very clear on their difficult geopolitical situation. We used to have very open discussions after I established their trust, which in Scandinavia takes some time. I should note that the Finns do not like being considered as Scandinavians. I think we had good relationships. They were very accessible, and our conversations were never tense. I had very good relationships with the members of the second tier leadership of the Conservative, Social Democratic and Agrarian Parties. I sometimes even had meetings with the leadership of these parties. Again, these were very open relationships which led to good conversations. So our ability to communicate with the bureaucracy and the politicians was very good, but always circumscribed by the reality of the Finnish situation.

Q: The elections were western-style?

NELSON: Absolutely. In fact, their electoral process was one of the things that made the Finns nervous. Except for the conservatives, the electorate in general did not want to see an increase of parliamentary seats occupied by the conservatives because they were concerned that the Soviets might get upset. The Finns would have preferred a smaller representation from the communists, but not to the level that might have made the Soviets nervous. There were nuances like that in the elections, but they were fairly conducted.

Q: In your social contacts, did you notice any interest in changing the external political situation?

NELSON: I think most of the Finns looked forward to the day when they would not have to always worry about the Soviets. They had broken loose before and hoped to be able to do it again. Many, especially the conservatives, would have preferred a policy which would have distanced Finland from the USSR. They thought that Finland had been much too much subservient to the Soviets. The social-democrats were very disliked by the Soviets because they were a leftist alternative to the communists which made them very attractive to the Finns. So I think, except for the conservatives and some of the Social-Democratic leadership, most of the Finns were resigned to their relationships with the Soviets. They all wanted to keep as much independence as they could, but understood the limitations. I think they understood their situation far better than we did.

Q: How did you find the Washington reaction to your reporting?

NELSON: I can't remember that we had much response. I don't think our reporting was a problem, even at the political levels which might have tended to be more ideological. I mention the episode that took place before I left Washington when I had to attend a meeting on whether assistance should be continued to Finland in light of the strong support for the communist party. That is the only policy issue that arose on Finland in my several years of dealing with the country, both in Washington and in Helsinki.

Q: How about dealing because I imagine you were talking to the Finnish Embassy and all, were they carrying the water for the Soviet Union or pretty much doing their own thing?

NELSON: Oh I don't think they were. They certainly would have avoided carrying the water for the Soviets to the extent that they could. I think that we had some problems with some of their votes in the UN so they had to behave with a certain amount of caution. They still had Soviet troops occupying the Porkkala peninsula and whenever Finns wanted to go through there they had to go through and shudder their railroad cars and that kind of thing and they were paying very heavy reparations and having to produce things for the Soviets. Their future was kind of uncertain should things get bad and we go to war of some kind or other. In that sense the situation had prevailed for many years including during the time that we were assigned there although the occupation of Porkkala had been removed by then.

I think the Finns were a concern. They had a big Communist Party and any gain by the Soviets or any foothold by the Soviets worried us because we were super worriers about the Communist threat. Looking back now live it looks pretty ridiculous but we were very, very worried.

One of the things that came up during that time was we had a Finnish election. Finland was an AID recipient from the United States and the Communists gained a seat or two maybe more, three or four, a fairly good sized party; about a third elected which held between 25 and 30 percent, was that way years later. I was a pretty new kid in town, fresh from the University of Indiana and I was told to go over to this hearing that was being held somewhere in town. I've forgotten who was in the chair.

Q: These were congressional hearings?

NELSON: It was a departmental thing I think and there may have been some congressional presence. It may have been under the auspices of AID itself, I just don't remember. But, in any event, I was very surprised by this and totally unprepared; it was a hearing on other countries too in Eastern Europe. They came to Finland and the AID program in Finland and they asked me, "Well now Mr. Nelson, we give all this aid to the Finns and then they go to the polls and they elect all these other Communists, more Communists than they had before we started giving them aid. So what'll we do? I mean it just looks like a colossal failure."

Well the only thing I could think to say was, "Well Sir, think of what it would have been like if we hadn't given them any aid." How many more Communists would have been elected. We ended our AID program with Finland; they were not a proper recipient anyway. They hadn't been for a couple of years.

So it was a worry and it worried people at the higher political levels that we were helping them out in some way and then they go elect more Communists than they had before, that's not good stuff.

Q: What was Finland like when you arrived in 1961? How did it set both internally and sort of in the external world?

NELSON: Well it was very tied in with the Soviets, it was still paying reparations, it was still very poor, and they were working very hard on meeting their obligations under the peace agreement that they made with the Russians. The Russians were still in occupation of the

Porkkala Peninsula, which meant when you took the train across southern Finland you had to go through this and they put blinders on the railroad cars; you couldn't drive through but you could take the train through but you couldn't look out. It was a very, very strange situation and the reparations there were big fuel shortages; there were still piles of trees in the squares for people for their heating purposes, they didn't have gas and oil or that sort of thing so it was pretty. They were managing but it was pretty poverty stricken sort of situation out of which they were climbing and with great effect. Of course in the ensuing years, and it was beginning in our time, the Russians were beginning to withdraw. We were very nervous because it was in the early days of the Cold War and we didn't like their close connections with the Russians. I'm afraid often we didn't understand that they really didn't have much choice. They had a president named Urho Kekkonen who was a very skillful politician. He had grown up as a farm boy but learned his way into politics somehow and was really pretty skillful, in retrospect, in dealing with the Russians although he made us very nervous at times.

So I think from an international point of view we were edgy about Finland's relationship with the Russians. Internally they were just working real hard to deal with their problems and try to keep the peace with the Soviets.

Q: Well now, who was our ambassador at the time?

NELSON: I was just thinking now who was our ambassador when I went there. I'm not sure of the order of things but it must have been Edson Sessions who had been, I believe, former deputy post master general or some such position. Anyway, he was a political appointee and he was there for some months before he was replaced or retired. I have forgotten exactly what happened there. He was a perfectly decent ambassador. He was replaced by Bernard Gufler who was a career Foreign Service officer. But he didn't stay very long only about a year or so, well maybe a little bit more than a year. I think I've got the order of things right. I think it was Bernard Gufler; he was replaced by Carl Rowan who incidentally died about a week ago. One of the sad things was the way Gufler was treated. He was a difficult person but he learned about his replacement by reading the newspaper. It's a kind of a sad thing; it does happen in our business but he hadn't been informed so that made him pretty unhappy. I think that was the end, I think that was his last assignment. I did meet him once later in the Department but I'm not sure what he was doing at that point.

One of the things I learned from Bernard Gufler was how to write. I'd fancy myself a pretty good writer and I guess I was but I learned some of the real...to write very usefully and communicate well and I appreciated that very much.

Q: How did you go through the learning process, what did you do?

NELSON: Well I was doing my reports and he had me on the carpet and said, "How are you supposed to understand this and you can make it much clearer if you did that." He took the time and I read some of my stuff since then, in recent years, and it's pretty good but I consider it the Gufler influence. So I was very appreciative of that experience. I did some very good studies of Urho Kekkonen with his encouragement and gave it some understanding of the man and what he thought he was facing. So that was a good relationship. Gufler, he wanted to be one of the boys

and he came in telling us to call him Guf. You can bet that didn't happen except once. We had a press attaché and he got a little too much to drink one day and they were seeing somebody off at the airport and he came in the room and said, "Hi ya Guf!" The rest of us just sank out of sight and, of course, he realized what he had done at that point as he really wasn't all that far-gone. So he had a hard time living that one down.

Then we got Carl Rowan and Carl Rowan stayed for ten months. It was a very interesting time. I have a very important place in my heart for Carl Rowan. He's a guy who came up the hard way, nobody helped him, he fought the awful battle, he fought odds in ways you and I wouldn't understand because he's a black man and it's just not possible to know it from his position, but he did extraordinarily well. He was very close to LBJ (Lyndon Baines Johnson).

Q: We're talking about President Johnson.

NELSON: Yes, Vice President Johnson at that time. He was so close to him that he got Vice President Johnson to do a Scandinavian tour. He did it all, he did Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Norway, he was utterly exhausted the poor man. But during that ten months we had a whirlwind of a time because it fascinated the Finns that we would send a black ambassador, a very colorful and very decent man.

Q: What was Rowan's background?

NELSON: He was a journalist. He came from Tennessee, I think. He fought his way against all the odds that black people faced particularly then. We didn't have affirmative action and all that stuff and he wouldn't have put up with it anyway. He would have done it his own way. He just made it work for him, made the system work for him. So it was a sort of colorful, very active, sometimes sort of uncertain time, really a big PR time (public relations) especially with ending up with this visit by Lyndon Baines Johnson. The Naval attaché in Stockholm had a white Cadillac convertible and he organized to have that darn car flown over to Finland for the Johnson visit. He had a ticker tape parade on the main street. It really was a very strange experience.

Q: While we're are talking about it, could you talk a little about Johnson because some of these trips I think the Kennedy White House tried to keep Johnson out and Scandinavia sounds like a place where you could put him where he's not going to do too much trouble and they are kind of happy to have him away. I mean there wasn't much love lost.

NELSON: It may well have been. That may have made it possible, but I know Rowan made a big thing. I think, I may be wrong but sort of instigated this and maybe he was in cahoots with the White House, I don't know. But he made everything possible we could do.

Q: Did you brief the Vice President?

NELSON: I didn't, Carl Rowan did. I saw him; I worked a lot on his speeches and things. He had speechwriters with him who were awful and inappropriate. We had a hard time getting him to reach into the right pocket for the right set of cards, his speech notes and many times we lost. We had one or two, well one, a very bad speech that was given at a sacred graveyard up in

Rovaniemi, up in the Arctic Circle. The Finns are still fighting over the war. First they had to fight the Russians and then the Germans wouldn't leave so they had to drive them out of there and going to war against Germany. So there were a lot of deep-seated feelings about all this and Johnson didn't do well there because he reached in the wrong pocket and read the wrong speech from our point of view. But he was tired and his wife.

Q: Lady Bird.

NELSON: Lady Bird, Lady Bird was there. What a magnificent woman.

Q: Everyone who has dealt with her has said she is just a delight.

NELSON: But he was petulant, he was a spoiled kid. He gave us a difficult time. His press wasn't all that good and we stayed up all night in the control room and prepared all his stuff for one of his aides to read him the awful results of the news coverage. He refused to do something that he had originally agreed to but Lady Bird filled in behind him beautifully. God she was great. My wife Siley Ann hit it off very well with Lady Bird and Carl Rowan would say, "Ok, Sam would you go fix that with Mrs. Johnson?" "Who me?" Well she went and fixed it and the two of them worked. So it was generally a successful trip.

One night I was in the control room, it was about two o'clock in the morning roughly and in comes, we lived out on the outskirts of town on the Baltic, on the edge of the Baltic. We had four kids what have you, and in comes my wife clutching a bunch of pillows. I said, "What are you doing here at this hour?" She said, "I'm bringing some pillows to your God damn vice president." He didn't like the pillows anyway and somebody knew that we had down pillows or something and so "Get Siley Ann, she'll bring in the pillows". So she did. I'll never forget. That was the phrase, "God damn vice president."

Well anyway, he had his Texas steaks and his Cutty Sark whiskey all with him. He wasn't bad but he was petulant, he was difficult. We went to Rovaniemi, which is the main town north on the Arctic Circle and they had a big Laplander show and they showed him reindeer roundup and stuff and the Laps in their garb and what have you. That was an interesting thing because after the vice president left, we went back to Helsinki. I was there sort of putting everything back and pieces were put back together. Finally these Lap little guys and all these furs and things and they had been lassoing and riding reindeer, hitching up sleds and what have you they went into the woods and they came out to drive home in their Mercedes. That was kind of a cute thing and the National Geographic did cover that part of the trip actually.

Q: Well let's talk a bit about the study you did about Kekkonen. At that time how did you read him vis-a-vis the East and the West.

NELSON: Well, I suppose how they officially and I suppose I absorbed that. I didn't feel as nervous about him as I think people in Washington felt about him. And sure this is not a big blip on our radar scan. The Communist Party was pretty strong in Finland; they had about 25 billion percent of their vote. Hertta Kuusinen was the leader of the Finnish Communist Party and her

father, I can't remember his name, Kuusinen, of course, but he was a survivor in the Politburo, he lasted all the way up until he died, he held out.

Q: We're talking about the Soviet Politburo?

NELSON: The Soviet, that's right but he was a member of the Soviet Politburo. He had gone over to those guys in spite of their revolution and his daughter was ahead of the Finnish Communist Party. So if you're worried about Communists there are grounds to worry.

Q: These were not national Communists these were Soviet Communists?

NELSON: These were Nationalists, the Finns are nationalists. The Finnish Communists were very nationalistic, very Finnish nationalistic but it was hard for the Soviet Union to do anything wrong in their point of view even though Stalin and his friends had made a deal with the Russians that said that the Russians could have Finland if they wanted. The Russians did take a stab at that, it cost them but they got control of it.

Q: The Winter War.

NELSON: The Winter War, that's right. There is a play called The Unknown Soldier, and this depicts the situation, I think, pretty well.

Q: A movie was made of that too. I think I saw that, a Finnish movie.

NELSON: This is when my oldest son went to Finnish school and that was his favorite book. He was head of his class in Finnish. Finnish was his first language at school.

But in that play there are arguments, political arguments, among the troops. The Finnish Communists are very Finnish, not Russian, not Soviet, not what's another term for the Russians, but they were very conflicted. It was very hard for them; they had to fight the Soviets at the same time being Communists. But there was an interesting feeling with that kind of problem maybe inner conflicts for those guys.

I must say Hertta Kuusinen was an extraordinarily able person and very, very articulate.

Q: Did we have contact with her?

NELSON: Yes we had a little, not much. I had some political contact with her. She was very effective on the floor and very tolerated by her Finnish colleagues. They appreciate her skill, her intellect, being strong. But I didn't, if I had it to do over again I would have done more to get close to her but I think that would have made my masters very unhappy.

Q: Yes, well I was just going to say this was not a time when there was an awful lot of sort of relaxation. I mean in Italy, well almost around the world, we really weren't talking to the Communists unless it was in a country like the Soviet Union.

NELSON: No and I think that was kind of stupid. I remember I used to drive the North Koreans in Finland nuts because I'd go over there and kind of shake hands with them and they'd run like hell. They didn't know what to do. It was terribly wrong.

Q: You weren't supposed to either, but you weren't going to be sent back to North Korea. Were we looking for signs in the Finnish Communist Party of differences? Were we looking for perhaps the embryonic ketoism or anything like that?

NELSON: I don't think we were that sophisticated about the Finnish Communists. I think the general conclusion was that Hertta Kuusinen was her father's daughter and she's got things in control and whatever the Politburo said they'll do.

Q: Well back to the president. What were our contacts with him and how did he play the Soviet west situation during this time?

NELSON: His view was the most important relationship Kekkonen had by far is that of the Soviet Union. He didn't want to upset the rest of [inaudible], if you were going to worry about it, it was more important to deal with and keep the Soviets happy. I had forgotten some incident occurred and I should remember this, as it mattered at the time.

I was in Sweden at the time that this thing happened. I've forgotten what it was but anyway Urho Kekkonen was summoned to the Kremlin and he went without argument and that bothered us a lot. He made some sort of arrangement, but the details of the deal struck at that time I'm just am not sure because the Russians had the right under their peace agreement to reoccupy some areas I've forgotten and Urho's objective was to avoid this kind of thing and also eventually get them to leave Porkkala, which eventually they did because it wasn't serving them. So to him he would like to be friends with everybody but all that would be sacrificed to keep the Russians at arms length if at all possible. He was very realistic; these guys were right next-door.

Q: Well they had been part of Russia at one part.

NELSON: Oh they had been yes, sure.

Q: Now this was a very tense time. There are two major things that happened that I recall. One was the erection of the Berlin Wall, which got rather tense and then the Cuban missile crisis in October of '62. How did these things play? Were we trying to do anything or were we just watching really?

NELSON: You mean in Finland?

Q: Yes.

NELSON: We didn't try to do anything with the Finns. I think there is enough realism involved. I mean Kekkonen made it clear, in fact instinctively, it was not my job to do. So we talked with them, I mean the ambassador did. He was always available, very accessible guy but he always got the same answer that we didn't want to hear. No, I think that the Finns became quite anxious

and we did have the rudiments of residential defense against nuclear fall out and this kind of thing. We were storing water in our basement and finding ways to seal windows and we were down wind from the Russians. We did do some things, but as far as our relationship with Finland we just sort of kept in touch as close as we could.

The Russians tried to subvert my wife.

Q: How did that work?

NELSON: Well they tried to. They thought they saw a relationship developing between one of their number and my wife and they tried to take advantage of that. It didn't work but my wife spotted it right away.

Q: Your position was what?

NELSON: Political counselor.

Q: So how did you deal with your counterparts in the ministry of foreign affairs, the Finnish ministry of foreign affairs?

NELSON: Well in the usual way, we had very good relationships with them. We had a very good open discussion they were very open folks.

Q: I mean would they at a certain point would they sit down and say, "Hi, you know what our position is here. You don't have the Soviet bear sitting across the border and you don't expect us to do this or that." Or did they sort of spout kind of the party line?

NELSON: No, no you are exactly right. They were very open on this and the discussion was very good with them. They didn't have any problem with that. It took a while; it took quite a while to establish trust with the Scandinavian types. But the Finns hate to be called Scandinavians, but they are in that part of the world. No, the relationship was very good, very accessible, not tense or anything like that that. We could say pretty much what one wanted to. They likewise. I mean this was true. I had a lot of relationships with the secondary level of the Conservative Social Democratic Agrarian Parties, which made up the bigger chunk of the Parliament. We had very good relationships and sometimes occasionally we talked to the leadership.

Again, it was a pretty open relationship and very satisfactory from their point of view but you know accepting reality.

Q: Well now with the political parties there, I mean, were there two elections and was this...

NELSON: Oh absolutely, two elections. This is one of the things that made the Finns nervous. One of things was they didn't want to see, except for the Conservatives, they didn't want to see an increase in Conservative seats because that would make the Russians nervous, they didn't want that. They'd like to see a little bit of diminution of the Communist members in the

Parliament but not very much because then the Russians knew. There were nuances but often it was quite often elected.

Q: Well, I mean, nuances are great but when you get around to voting; what was your sounding of people you meet socially and all this? Obviously they were aware of the situation, but did they have any hope of breaking loose at this point?

NELSON: Oh, they looked to the day when they could, yes. They had broken loose before and they hoped to do it again. They had hopes but they realized, I think, most of them, not all of them, that they ought to stand up more strongly to the Russians, they shouldn't be so kowtowing as we have been and that kind of thing.

The Social Democrats were very disliked by the Russians because they were a leftist alternative and that's were a lot of Finns would like to go. So this affected the attitude of these folks. I think in general the idea was let's accept the Conservative side and some of the Social Democratic leadership, let's not upset the Russians for God's sakes, that is the worse thing to do. But you have to keep as much as you can. In that respect they do a lot better than we do.

Q: Well did you find in our reporting that we were having a problem. This didn't rank very high on the American international radar but sometimes you have a problem reporting where you're dealing with people who are dealing with a tremendous problem in very practical terms but when it gets kicked back to Washington, particularly when it moves up into the political field, it gets almost ideological. I mean people say either you're with us or against us or something like that. Was that a problem for you all?

NELSON: I can't remember that it was. I suppose it must have been. Before I went to Finland I was in the Northern European bureau and one of my responsibilities was to, having never been there of course, and I was sent off completely blind, very naive to some hearing in which featured the director of AID I think or something like that but I was caught completely in flap. I had no idea what this was about, would I just go to this meeting. Well I went and I thought just go and watch and listen to this and report back. No, no I was to be a witness. I was totally unprepared for what I knew. There had been an election in Finland and the Communists had gained three seats and at that time we had an AID program prepared, folks with AID a little bit of a fall out from the Marshall Plan even though the Finns didn't join it in Western Europe. The director said to me, "Mr. Nelson we put all this money into Finland and what happened? The Communist Party increased six fold." All I could think of was, "Well Sir, think what the vote would have been like if we hadn't given them any money at all." He had to leave it at that as it answered the question. So, things like that were happening but I can't recall anything in the fall out.

LESTER E. EDMOND
Economic Counselor
Helsinki (1961-1964)

Lester E. Edmond attended the City College of New York and Harvard University. Edmond was in the US Army during WWII and worked in the State Department before entering the Foreign Service as a Rotation Officer and International Economist. His posts in the Foreign Service include Japan, Finland, Washington, DC, National War College, France, and the Philippines. Edmond was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2001.

Q: That was after the change of administrations. The Kennedy Administration had come in. MacArthur had left?

EDMOND: Yes, MacArthur had left, but I left soon thereafter, prior to the arrival of the new Ambassador, Edwin Reischauer. After serving two consecutive tours totaling almost five years in Tokyo, I was informed that my next assignment would be as Economic Counselor in Helsinki. Now that I look back upon it I realize that this was my only Foreign Service assignment in which I had no input into the decision. It was entirely a Bureau of Personnel decision.

Q: And nobody asking your opinion.

EDMOND: Nobody solicited my reaction. I was pleased about the assignment for several reasons. It would be my first supervisory assignment, albeit a small section in a small Embassy. Also, after having spent the previous ten years dealing with Asian affairs I was pleased to experience working in a European embassy, even one that was geographically far from the heart of Europe.

Q: You were in charge of the Economic Section?

EDMOND: The economic and commercial sections were, in effect, one. There was a Commercial Attaché who reported to me.

Q: Were you given and Finnish language training before you went?

EDMOND: No, I was not, and I think the Department was very sensible in that. In the first place, few people speak Finnish aside from the relatively small population of Finland. Finnish as a language has a relationship only with Hungarian and even in that connection one has to be an expert linguistic scholar to observe any relationship between the two tongues.

Q: And English is very widely spoken?

EDMOND: And English is widely spoken. I served under two ambassadors. The first, Bernard Guffler was a very conservative and traditional Foreign Service Officer and the other, Carl Rowan was a complete contrast. Carl Rowan was a black journalist who had been appointed Ambassador to Finland by President Kennedy. Kennedy had earlier appointed Carl to be Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. Today an assignment at that level would not be considered newsworthy but in January 1961 it was considered noteworthy since Carl's appointment meant that he was the highest ranking Black officer in the State Department.

After serving for two controversial years as Deputy Assistant Secretary at State, Rowan was appointed to be Ambassador to Finland. Carl commented at a later date that he had been given a lucrative offer to become a columnist and that when he offered President Kennedy his resignation, the President, who wished to keep him in the administration, offered him the Ambassadorship to Helsinki.

It was only after we had become rather close that Carl told me the story of how President Kennedy came to ask him to join the administration. Carl had been given an assignment by his publisher to interview Kennedy as well as Nixon. President Kennedy knew that John Cowles, the publisher was a strong supporter of Nixon and he assumed that Carl was assigned to do a hatchet job on him.

When Kennedy saw that the articles were eminently fair, he said he never forgot Carl's name I also was told that Kennedy read the published stories while traveling on a campaign plane and turned to the reporters who accompanied him to say "How is it that this guy can understand what I am like and what I hope to accomplish so much better than those of you who are accompanying me and seeing me daily."

It is difficult to imagine two assignments in juxtaposition to each other that were as different as were the economic assignments in Tokyo and Helsinki. There is no need to belabor the physical differences of the two countries which are apparent. One was a country with a very high population density, a populace living together in a confined area. The population of the second approximated four and a half million living primarily in a few medium sized cities scattered through a largely empty forested countryside. Japan was a country with which we had recently fought a great war and which aside from our increasing involvement in Vietnam was at the center of our overall political and economic interests in Asia. In contrast Finland, due to its small population and relatively isolated position was of relatively little economic or commercial interest to Washington or to American industry, with the possible exception of the paper industry. Economic and commercial matters thus were not paramount in our relations with Finland.

Due to its proximity to the USSR, Finland was a significant listening post for the US. There was a substantial CIA contingent and within the Embassy we had military personnel monitoring aircraft takeoffs from nearby Soviet airfields. There was little doubt that the Soviets knew what we were doing for it was an open secret that the Russians occupied a building overlooking the Embassy where they monitored what we were monitoring. Serving in Finland was a most interesting professional assignment due in large measure to the continuing tense relationship between the Soviet Union and Finland.

The Cold War still was in full play and dominated our overall relationship with the Soviet Union. Finland had fought two wars with the Soviet Union, the first when the Soviets attacked in November 1939. After having achieved independence from Russia at the close of World War I the Finns seized a portion of eastern Karelia. The Finnish-Soviet border was thus set at approximately twenty miles from Leningrad. Russia asked Finland at that time to give up a strip of territory on the Karelian Isthmus north of Leningrad and some islands along the approaches to the city but the U.S.S.R. was not strong enough to press its claims. The Soviet Union continued

to regard the proximity of the border to Leningrad as a serious strategic weakness, particularly as Finland traditionally looked to Germany for support, rather than the Soviet Union with whom its relations continued to be strained.

In 1939 the Soviet Union attacked Finland. Its unprovoked aggression was moved by strategic and not ideological considerations. It wished to protect Leningrad and deny Finland being used as a base for anti-Soviet aggression. The Finns fought valiantly and won world-wide sympathy but eventually surrendered rather than face a complete loss of their independence. In 1941, when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, the Finns allied themselves with the Germans in order to revenge their earlier defeat. When the tide of battle turned against the Finns, the Soviet Union and Finland signed an armistice that restored the altered 1940 borders. This apparently reasonably generous treatment was tied, however, to Finland's acceding to a mutual defense treaty with the Soviet Union plus the USSR's demanding an onerous level of reparations payments that would strain the Finnish economy for years to come. Finland, however, retained its independence and its democratic government in contrast to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania which were reannexed by the Soviet Union. Finland continued to face Soviet interference in its domestic and international affairs. The need to tailor its domestic and international policies so as not to offend the Soviet Union became known as "Finlandization," a term that the Finns detested.

Soon after our arrival in Finland, I was able to observe a significant example of Soviet interference in Finnish affairs. Finnish President Urho Kekkonen had just completed a successful official visit to the United States, where he had been well and warmly received. Upon reflection, I now wonder whether the Soviet timing of its demarche might have been related to the warming of US and Finnish ties. Kekkonen's conversation with President Kennedy had gone well and the joint communiqué noted American understanding for the reasoning behind Finland's policy of neutrality. President Kennedy stated that the United States would "scrupulously respect Finland's chosen course" adding pointedly that all nations should avoid interference in the affairs of Finland.

President Kekkonen was still in the United States when word was received that the Soviet Union demanded that military consultations between the U.S.S.R. be undertaken under terms of the 1948 Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance that had been signed upon conclusion of the Finnish-Soviet conflict. The treaty called for the two governments to confer with each other if it were established that the threat of an armed attack on the Soviet Union or Finland existed on the part of Germany or its allies. The demarche particularly complained about preparations that were underway for the establishment of a "so-called joint military command" between Germany and Denmark.

Publication of the Soviet note aroused world-wide speculation as to the future of Finland as an independent non-Communist nation. Within Finland there was widespread concern and fear. I observed weeping women on the streets and throughout the country men and women stayed huddled before their radio and television sets.

The Soviet motivation for the demarche soon became clear. Military consultations could be avoided if Finland "assured" Russia that its foreign policy of neutrality based on friendship with

Russia would be maintained in the future. This was the first indication that the Soviet Union was concerned with developments within Finland and not with happenings in the Baltic area.

In a dramatic gesture, President Kekkonen ordered new parliamentary elections to assure the Russians that the Finnish people favored friendly relations with the U.S.S.R. and thus military consultations would be avoided. Kekkonen, who was the leader of the Agrarian Party calculated, undoubtedly correctly, that the Finnish people would reject the Social Democrats and the Conservatives who for the most part had been kept out of Finnish government coalitions due to the known opposition of the Soviet Union.

The Kremlin promptly served notice that President Kekkonen was too optimistic. The Soviets informed the Finns that since the sending of the first note, the threat of war had become more acute and the demand for immediate military consultations was reiterated. Kekkonen's response was to ask for a meeting with Chairman Khrushchev who agreed to meet with the Finnish President.

Only hours prior to Khrushchev-Kekkonen discussions, Olavi Honka, a relatively unknown, retiring, and colorless civil servant who was the presidential candidate of the Social Democrats and three other parties, withdrew from the Presidential race. The candidates in the January 1962 election thus would be limited to Kekkonen and a Communist party candidate. Honka had surmised, or perhaps had been informed, that the Soviet Union feared Kekkonen's possible defeat even though he and the parties backing him had made clear their advocacy of good relations with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet press agency Tass widely publicized the following comment of Chairman Khrushchev. "I shall say frankly-and evidently this is not news-that the activity of rightist groups, the Tannerites (the Social Democrats) in Finland, aimed at undermining friendship with the Soviet Union...causes us serious concern."

The communiqué issued at the close of the conversation included the following. "The Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers...believing in his (Kekkonen's) good will and ability to support and strengthen the present Paasikivi-Kekkonen foreign policy line, the line of Finland's neutrality, to which the Soviet Union lends support, declares that the Soviet Government considers it possible for the time being to postpone the military consultations it had proposed."

And so the German military danger which had arisen so unexpectedly evaporated equally unexpectedly. With only token opposition Kekkonen was re-elected President by the largest peace-time majority (71 percent) in Finnish history. Thus, just three years after overthrowing a Finnish Government through economic pressures, the Soviet Union used political and military pressures to play key role in determining who should hold the Finnish presidency.

In 1958, the Soviet Union again showed its distaste for the formation of a coalition Finnish Government headed by a Social Democrat by ordering a boycott of all Finnish imports. This would have devastated the Finnish economy. Finland was already suffering from heavy unemployment. Twenty percent of Finland's exports were destined for the Soviet Union and almost all of Finland's newly built machinery and shipbuilding industries that were established

to meet the Soviet Union's reparations demands were dependent on the USSR. President Kekkonen almost certainly persuaded the three cabinet members to resign which ultimately resulted in the formation of a minority Agrarian Party Government satisfactory to the Soviet Union.

The most important US visitor during my stay in Finland was Vice President Johnson. The amount of preparation that goes into the visit of a President or Vice President is astounding, and the requirements of the visit completely disrupted the normal activities of the Embassy. The details of the preparation required such things as planning and coordination with local officials, meeting the security requirements established by the Secret Service, finding appropriate hotel rooms for the large party that accompanied the Vice President and planning appropriate entertainment arrangements. Ambassador Rowan outdid himself when he decided to give the visit a Texan flavor by hosting a giant outdoor Texas barbecue. Sides of beef were flown in and barbecued in huge pits that were dug in a nearby park. The unusual party enchanted the Finns and would have been the highlight of the visit but for an unfortunate incident.

The meetings with President Kekkonen and other officials had gone very well and the visit was to be concluded with a solemn visit to a cemetery which contained the Finnish dead from their War of Independence. It is the equivalent of our Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and is considered hallowed ground.

Vice President Johnson's briefing papers made it very clear that Finnish protocol called for a moment of silence and precluded the making of any speeches. When the Johnson party arrived at the site a vast crowd of Finns were there for the ceremonies which I believe called for the laying of a wreath. Seeing the crowd, Johnson pulled some speech notes out of his pocket and started making an address. At the same time he waved the crowd to come closer to hear him and many rushed around the tomb stones to get closer to what had become the podium. Compounding the confusion, one of Lyndon Johnson's daughters who had accompanied him on the trip chose that time to give out as souvenirs, pencils which had the Vice President's name printed on them, which also created a bit of turmoil. The Finnish officials were in a state of shock and then anger at this performance. Fortunately the Finnish press downplayed the discourtesy in their coverage and thus it did not irrevocably mar the visit.

I consider myself most fortunate in being given the Finnish assignment. Although substantively the economic and commercial issues were not too demanding, it did provide me with the need to establish priorities and provide work assignments for my small staff. Perhaps the overarching issue for the Embassy was the maintenance of close and friendly relations with the Finns; to assure them of our moral support in their efforts to remain free and independent. In support of this effort, we engaged in a substantial amount of interaction, largely through social affairs. Most Finns were very friendly and pro-American and appeared to appreciate invitations to the Embassy and to our homes. With English being widely known, there was no difficulty dealing with the most abstruse subjects. I still remember a luncheon at the Embassy, where I was seated next to the Minister of Finance who had written his dissertation on the general subject of central banking in Finland. We spent the entire luncheon, I fear to the discomfort of some of the other guests, dealing with the subject as to whether in a democracy, the central bank should be

independent or under the control of the elected government. I have forgotten which side of the argument I took, since I saw merit on both sides and would argue either point of view.

What I gained most from my Finnish assignment was my acquaintanceship, which later burgeoned to friendship, with Carl Rowan, who arrived in Helsinki in May 1962. We soon developed a warm and trusting relationship. Carl had relatively little interest in economic affairs, per se, and appeared to be happy to leave that side of the Embassy's activities to me. He also became aware that he could trust me to be loyal to him and that I would defend his interests. I think he valued those considerations more than most since he had to struggle since childhood to overcome discriminatory barriers put in place by a discriminatory white society.

The Finns didn't know what to make of him. In part, they were enchanted by the idea. Their experience with black Americans was practically nil, and they were in many ways delighted to have someone who was such a public figure. Of course, he could handle himself well. As an example of their naivete of the American racial scene, I recall one instance when the cream of Finnish society gave Carl and his wife Vivien a welcome party. In trying to honor Carl, and to make him feel welcome, they all got together and sang "Old Black Joe." I happened to be sitting facing Carl, and it was almost impossible for both of us not to burst out in laughter. Despite his self confidence, he had never felt himself completely accepted in the State Department and now he was in an Embassy and in a country, both of which were lily white. For some unknown reason our chemistries clicked and we got along very well.

In late January 1964 President Johnson called Rowan to Washington and asked him to join the administration as Director of the US Information Agency. Carl had been back in Washington on consultations at the time of the Kennedy assassination and President Johnson had, I understand, intimated to him then that he would like Carl to return to Washington and join the Administration in some capacity. Carl never told me whether the Directorship of USIA was specifically mentioned at that time. Edward R. Murrow, who was suffering from lung cancer, had submitted his resignation in mid-December.

There is little question that the President also wanted Carl to be close to him as he had come to appreciate Carl's counsel. The President had become acquainted with Carl when the latter accompanied him on several Vice Presidential trips. It also did not hurt that the appointment of a prominent Black would send a signal to the Black community that he wished to have a positive relationship with them.

Upon his return to Helsinki, Carl flabbergasted me by asking if I would be willing to cut my assignment short and return to Washington with him and be his Executive Assistant at USIA. I asked for twenty four hours to think it over. I was concerned that an assignment outside the normal career path could well be disadvantageous to my career. Such assignments generally are not viewed as the type that leads to rapid advancement. I already was handicapped by being a so called "Wristonee," an officer who had not come into the Service by the traditional route. On the other hand, I liked working with Carl and believed that working intimately with him in the field of public affairs could only turn out to be a challenging and interesting experience.

In my naivete I said, “Carl, I’d like that very much, but my tour here is only partially completed and I am not sure the Department would release me. I recall Carl looking at me somewhat quizzically, saying “I don’t think that’s going to be a problem.” He then sent a message to the Department, with a copy to the Personnel Office in the White House and within seventy two hours I was informed that my assignment was being changed and Shom and I were given approximately ten days to make the necessary arrangements for our departure.

Soon after my arrival in Washington I could tell that the assignment was going to be a challenging one and that the staff of USIA was regarding the change in command with some suspicion. Carl was replacing as Director, a man who was idealized by the staff. Edward R. Murrow was viewed as the premier television newsmen of his generation, a man of unquestioned integrity whose very presence as Director of USIA brought that organization prestige that it had never had previously. Carl faced the suspicion, as he had in his previous assignments that he might have been appointed because he was black. On top of that, Carl selected a State Department Foreign Service Officer with no public affairs experience as his Executive Assistant.

ERIC FLEISHER
Finnish Language Training
Washington, DC (1963-1964)

Labor Attaché
Helsinki (1964-1966)

Eric Fleisher was born in Washington, DC and was raised in Japan. He served in the Army during WWII and attended the University of Stockholm and George Washington University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His posts included Germany, Washington, DC, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. Fleisher was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2002.

Q: In 1963, you were selected for Finnish language training. Was this something you had asked for?

FLEISHER: No, I had asked to go to Japan. I spoke Japanese and I always figured that my career was going to be in Japan and that the Nordic countries was just a temporary diversion. Dick Finn who inspected the post towards the end of my tour in Copenhagen, and who I had known from when he was a naval intelligence Japanese language officer in Tokyo at the end of the War, recommended that I be sent to Japan for my next tour. That was in the works when I got a letter from Personnel saying that if I would study Finnish for 10 months, I could replace Harvey Nelson, who was chief of the Political Section in Helsinki. At that time, as a new FSO-4 in Japan, I would be way down the line, whereas in Finland I would have my own section. So, there was no question. I opted for Finland.

Q: Did we have many Finnish language officers?

FLEISHER: Not many, no, very few. We were just a handful and we all knew each other.

Q: Was the training worthwhile?

FLEISHER: It was essential.

Q: It's a difficult language.

FLEISHER: A very difficult language. But for a political officer it was absolutely necessary. If you were going to meet the labor people, the Agrarians (Center Party) or any of the left wing politicians, not to mention the Communists, Finnish was the only language they spoke. Our friends the Conservatives and business people spoke English, but, although influential, they were not among those where the political power lay.

Q: Well, they speak Swedish, some of them, too.

FLEISHER: Oh, yes. That's fine. I spoke Swedish fluently. But treach the labor people, people who really were the core...

Q: They were running the country, I guess.

FLEISHER: Well, they were partly running the country. They had considerable influence although the Center Party with President Kekkonen was in control of domestic affairs and unquestionably so of foreign policy. But we knew that the Social Democrats were the wave of the future. The labor movement and the communists... The labor movement was split into communist and non-communist (social democratic) factions. If you were going to communicate with these people, which was vital, you had to know Finnish. I knew it enough to talk business with them. I didn't use Finnish when I went to the foreign office. There I used English or Swedish. But when I was talking to labor leaders, it was Finnish. No matter how bad it was, I could get my ideas across and understand what they said.

Q: Could you read the Finnish language newspapers?

FLEISHER: Yes.

Q: That's important, too. How many were in your section in Helsinki?

FLEISHER: That was sort of the same arrangement as in the political section in Copenhagen. My deputy was the Labor attache.

Q: And presumably some very good local employees, too.

FLEISHER: We had some good local employees. In fact, two of them hired.

Q: If one was the Labor attache, you did everything else, I presume.

FLEISHER: Well, Paul Canney the labor attaché did everything, too. I did labor also when Paul was away, on home leave or was sick or something...

Q: Paul Canney was an FSO, wasn't he?

FLEISHER: He was. In fact, we were in Finnish language train together.

Q: Did you feel as a section chief that you were micromanaged by thambassador or the DCM or did they leave you alone?

FLEISHER: That's interesting. Tyler Thompson, the ambassador gave me a pretty free reign. When I came there, I had somewhat of a different point of view regarding Finnish politics from that of my DCM, who held the views of the preceding ambassador. This was George Ingram, an FSO-2 or 1, and I was an FSO-4. But Tyler let us hash it out. I don't think it did my career too much good for the first few years. But I think George and I came to an understanding and he respected my views, as I did his, and we became very good friends. In fact, he asked me to come and join him in EUR/SCAN after he left Finland and became country director. I become his deputy and later with his support succeeded him when he retired from the Foreign Service. But during the first part of my time in Finland, yes, I did feel that George was looking over my shoulder and changing a few things, some maybe for the better, I think, but...

Q: I knew George. We were colleagues at the National War College.

I know what you mean. Did you get to travel around that rather largcountry?

FLEISHER: Yes, I did. Tyler was very good about that. He believed that all of us in the Embassy should get out and meet the people, so I did. I went to party conventions. I took any excuse to use the embassy airplane and go up north. I spoke to the communists and was a guest of the communists. We talked politics. I was all over Finland. I accompanied Tyler on many of the trips.

Q: Did you have to write speeches for him?

FLEISHER: No. Well, I put in some on the political part, but usually the USIA people furnished it. And Tyler liked to do his own thing.

Q: How influential at that time were the communists in Finland?

FLEISHER: They were very influential. They had pretty close to 30% of the electorate - that is, the communists and their left-wing socialist front organization the SKDL. The Finnish Peoples Democratic League (SKDL) pretty much followed the Communist Party (FKP) line. During my time, however, a split developed within the communist movement which we followed with great interest. The differences between the communists loyal to Moscow and the Finnish communists, who considered themselves first and foremost nationalist Finns could no longer be contained. The Finnish communists were really Finnish. They had fought on the Finnish side against the Soviets in both the Winter War, 1939-40, and the Continuation War, 1941-44. They were not pro-American, but some of them weren't unfriendly. I cultivated them. In fact, their chairman Ele Alenius became a friend.

Q: I think we were concerned, were we not, that President Kekkonen was getting too friendly with Moscow?

FLEISHER: Yes, we were. In fact, this was a very difficult problem that we had to follow. The western press said that Kekkonen was giving Finland away to the Russians. But that was really not quite so. Kekkonen had to follow a very difficult line. He had to have the friendship and the confidence of the Russians to remain in power in Finland. On the other hand, he couldn't give the country away and he didn't want to give the country away, I believe. We think, and I think in retrospect, that he did give more than was necessary. But to his credit he ceded no Finnish territory and Finland did continue to maintain its democratic institutions and way of life. He did make concessions such as the purchase of Soviet nuclear reactors instead of Westinghouse reactors, which everyone new were better, and the press was limited in how far it could go in criticizing the Russians.

Q: And the Soviets kept a close eye on Finland.

FLEISHER: Indeed.

Q: Why wouldn't Finland join the non-aligned countries?

FLEISHER: I think they thought about it, but the fact was that they weren't non-aligned. The Finns in their hearts were very much aligned. They showed it to us, American and western diplomats, very openly. I remember one time going down to the sauna with a Finnish Social Democratic Party leader. We were talking about Vietnam. He said, "Eric, why don't you go in and wring that chicken's neck quickly?"

Q: That wasn't what we were hearing all the time in Scandinavia. What was the effect in Finland of the ouster of Khrushchev?

FLEISHER: That's a very interesting question. I was the first to report the overthrow of Khrushchev. A friend of mine the publisher of "Helsingin Sanomat," the largest newspaper in Finland, called me one evening at home. He was really a friend of America. His father was also a long time friend of America. He called me and said, "Eric, I've got a present for you. This is absolutely real and I promise you on my life. Khrushchev has just been deposed. Call your people and tell them that." I called Tyler and he said, "Well, this is yours. You call the Department." My mistake was that I called the desk officer instead of calling the AS, or at least a DAS. But I didn't realize that at the time. I was going through what I knew to be the proper channels. I don't know how far it ever went - if it went up to the AS or to the Secretary.

Q: I didn't realize that you broke the news to Washington.

FLEISHER: I never even got a letter of thanks. I thought I'd be promoted. Tyler said, "You'll be promoted." Anyway, yes, this had a big effect in Finland. It meant that there was fluidity that hadn't existed before. Everybody knew it. But how this was going to play out was the question. Kekkonen knew it, too and he realized that he had to reaffirm his power.

Q: Right. He had been playing with Khrushchev.

FLEISHER: Yes. So things were pretty open and flexible. You weren't sure what was going to happen, what the political constellation was going to look like, and how it was going to affect the Social Democrats.

Q: It must have affected the Finnish communists.

FLEISHER: That it did. It certainly weakened the Finnish Communist Party, but the so-called Stalinists, the hard-line communists were already in decline. It encouraged defections from the FKP to the SKDL and loosened the hold that the FKP had over the SKDL. As an example it became possible for the Chairman of the SKDL and his wife to come to my home for a dinner party. This would have been unthinkable earlier.

Q: Did you participate when Averil Harriman visited?

FLEISHER: Yes, I did. The whole embassy did.

Q: Did he do any good?

FLEISHER: Yes. Well, he spoke very well. He was a good representative of America.

Q: What did he talk about? It wasn't Vietnam at that time.

FLEISHER: No. He really talked more about American values and support for democracy. It was more general.

Q: We weren't deeply into Vietnam. They were just getting into it.

FLEISHER: Yes.

Q: The election in '66 then brought the Social Democrats into power. What was the Soviet reaction to that?

FLEISHER: It was negative. Very negative. The Soviets were not afraid of the conservatives or the liberals, but they were afraid of the Social Democrats because the Social Democrats worked the same side of the street, the labor movement. They made it plain by calling several Finnish politicians to Moscow, including Vaino Leskinen, a nationalist Social Democratic leader, who was considered not to be a friend of the USSR, and laying down the law that they didn't want a Social Democratic administration or at least not one that included persons not acceptable to the Soviet Union. So, the Social Democrats understood that Leskinen and others could not be in a Social Democratic government. Leskinen went to Moscow to try and make amends with the Soviets, but his visit to Canossa and his "me a culpa" had no effect on the Russians. It was clear to the Social Democrats that if they formed a government it could not include any of their members who had previously opposed the Soviet Union.

Q: Our embassy role presumably was to keep rather quiet and low key during this period and let the Social Democrats handle that with the Soviets?

FLEISHER: Yes. We had no way of projecting power or even very much leverage. Our influence was limited.

Q: Did the Social Democrats make an alliance with the communists then?

FLEISHER: They took the communists into government, but it wasn't an alliance. Here I think we have to clarify "alliance." Finland is often misunderstood to have been an ally of Germany. Finland was not an ally of Germany. Finland was a co-belligerent. They got into the war and they came out of the war on their own. They never became a Nazi vassal state. They did not turn their Jewish population over to the Germans. When the Germans requested that they identify Jews in Finland the Finns replied, "We have no Jews. We only have Finns here." So, yes the Social Democrats appointed several communists to minor portfolios, but they did not have access to cabinet deliberations on foreign policy or defense.

Q: Secretary Rusk made a visit. I presume you were involved in that?

FLEISHER: Very much so, yes.

Q: Was that successful?

FLEISHER: Very successful. Rusk and Kekkonen hit it off very well. I might tell a story about that. We had a lot of paper traffic before the visit. One of the messages was from Rusk to the Ambassador. It said, "I will do everything you suggested, but I will not go into a sauna with Kekkonen." This was something that we knew would be a sticking point in the visit. So, the visit takes place and we go out to Kekkonen's residence, which was a little ways in the country. We get there and after a little exchange of pleasantries Kekkonen took Rusk by the shoulder and said, "Now we go down to the sauna." Rusk looked at Tyler and said, "Tyler, you're fired."

Q: That's very nice. Then came the 50th anniversary of Finnish independence, which I gather was a large celebration.

FLEISHER: Yes.

Q: The Soviets sent their president, Mr. Podgorny. Who did we send that?

FLEISHER: I can't remember. If we did, I don't think it was anybody particularly... I don't think we sent anybody.

Q: Maybe it was just the ambassador who represented us.

FLEISHER: Yes. I'm sure it was just the ambassador. We all remember these important visits.

Q: Yes, of course.

FLEISHER: We went around like chickens with our heads cut off.

Q: Were we pleased when the premiership changed in '68? Mr. Koivisto came in.

FLEISHER: Yes, Koivisto became prime minister. We got along very well with Koivisto, who was primarily an economist, and an intellectual. We got along well with him.

Q: So there were no policy implications that would harm us?

FLEISHER: No, not that I can recall. It was really pretty much continuation of the same.

Q: What was the Finnish reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia?

FLEISHER: Very, very strongly against. I was up in Lapland on vacation, in Sweden, at the time. I rushed back to the Embassy and when I came in the door the marine guard told me that the ambassador wanted to see me right away. So, the first thing we thought was, "What's going to be the reaction here? What's going to happen?" We thought pretty much that there were going to be pro-Czech demonstrations, but how peaceful would they be? Well, they did demonstrate and the demonstrations were peaceful, but there was a very large demonstration in front of the Soviet embassy and in other parts of Helsinki. Yes, the Soviets realized that the people were against them.

Q: The Soviet ambassador must have taken it very low in profile at that time.

FLEISHER: They kept a low profile and they did so for a while. And so did we didn't have to do anything. The anti-Soviet atmosphere was clearly in the air.

Q: I know all over Western Europe that was a shock and it led to a lot of things the Soviets didn't want. What were Finland's relations with Sweden during this period?

FLEISHER: Finland's relations with Sweden were good. It's a very complicated relationship because it's both a family relationship and a Swedish and Finnish ethnic relationship. Finland was part of Sweden until 1808 when it was ceded to Russia and became a grand duchy within the Czarist Empire. But the ties with Sweden were very strong. The Swedish families who ran most of Finland maintained very close contact with Sweden. The Swedish language is spoken in much of Finland. Even when I was there, it was one of the official languages, as French is in Canada. Yes, and during World War II, many Finns, particularly children, were evacuated to Sweden. A good number of Swedes volunteered to fight in the Finnish army, especially during the Winter War.

Q: They did against Russia.

FLEISHER: Yes. So, it was a very close personal relationship. Still, there was a vast difference between the Swedes who comprised the upper class and the Finnish speaking lower classes. So,

there was a class antagonism there. Of course, the official relations were very good. They coordinated their foreign policy with the other Nordics. For example, we would make representation for our positions at the foreign office before the opening of the UN General Assembly. Every year we tried to sell our view on Communist Chinese recognition and membership in the UN. Our Finnish interlocutors would say, "We'll take your views under consideration and we will discuss them at the Nordic ministers' meeting." When we would go back later after the Nordic ministers had met they'd say, "Well, the Nordic ministers decided thus and so and there isn't very much we can do about things now. It wasn't our decision."

Q: They had you there. There was not much you could say about that. And how about with the other Scandinavians, with the Danes and the Norwegians?

FLEISHER: With the Norwegians the relationship is personally a very good one because they are both stepchildren of Sweden, so to speak. With the Danes, it was more distant but very friendly, yes.

Q: So no real problems.

FLEISHER: No real problems.

Q: After those interesting years in Helsinki, you came back to the Department. You were on the Scandinavian desk in EUR at the time.

RICHARD C. BARKLEY
Rotation Officer
Helsinki (1963-1965)

Ambassador Richard C. Barkley was born on December 23, 1932 in Illinois. He attended Michigan State College, where he received his BA in 1954, and Wayne State University, where he received his MA in 1958. He served in the US Army overseas from 1955-1957 as a 1st lieutenant. His career has included positions in Finland, the Dominican Republic, Norway, South Africa, Turkey, and Germany. Ambassador Barkley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 12, 2003.

Q: Well then, how did you find Finnish? I mean this is supposed to be in the languages this is supposed to be pretty far up the line as far as difficulty.

BARKLEY: I think it has been properly ranked. It is a very difficult language. In those days, as you perhaps recall, the basement of the Arlington Towers was the foreign service institute.

Q: Basically a garage.

BARCKLEY: It was a garage. And it was cut up into sort of cubicles, there was very little air movement down there, and you would sit in this little cubicle and repeat totally unintelligible sentences until they became slightly intelligible. It was a real fight not only to learn but to stay awake. But I did begin to appreciate the emphasis on a language program had some great merit. By the time I went out to Finland I could function on a very basic level. Of course it always struck me that if you are going to learn a hard language like that, to only get half of the course might make credit sense but it doesn't make intellectual sense because you are only beginning to progress along the line, and you have got some very basic things, but you really haven't developed any sophistication. Happily in a place like Finland, one of the Nordic countries, the official language was English. So we were able to function very well, and the vast majority of the people, almost everybody in the foreign office and the vast majority in the government spoke English with some facility. The language was really a bear; I will say that.

Q: You were there from what, '63...

BARCKLEY: Yes, I was there from March of '63 until March of '65.

Q: What was our embassy like?

BARCKLEY: It was a small embassy, a very small embassy. Our ambassador at that time was Bernard Gufler, who was one of the crusty old ambassadors who were still around at that time. He had been minister in Berlin before Finland. The political section was two people. The economic section was two people. I think there were two people in the admin section, one in the consular section. Of course the full complement of defense attachés. The station was sizable because of where it was located. There was a commercial attaché. That is about it. Well we had a cultural attaché and a USIA program, but it was a small embassy.

Q: What were you doing?

BARCKLEY: In those days in the training of junior officers, you expected to spend six months in every section of the embassy. Of course, as soon as I landed it became clear to me anyway, the admin counselor had his eyes on me. Of course, the last place I wanted to serve. But I went in and was introduced to the ambassador and had a chat. He found out that I had studied in Germany and that piqued his interest. We discussed what was going on in Berlin and a couple of other things, and he said, "Well I want you to be in the political section." So I ended up in the political section for about eight months. Then I went in to the economic section, mostly connected with the commercial attaché because there were a couple of trade shows going on. That was actually quite fun. I did admin for six months and then six months in consular. Actually it was quite a good exposure to the basic ways an embassy functions. The embassy was small enough that you get a real overview of what was happening.

Q: What was sort of the political situation in Finland at the time, and what was the relationship to the United States?

BARCKLEY: Well, Finland was a neutral country actually but it was under enormous pressure from the Soviet Union. It had been following for many years a thing called the Paasikivi-

Kekkonen Line. Basically that was never to pose such a threat to the Soviet Union that they would take counter measures. This all goes back to the historical consequences of the Finnish-Soviet war and all of those things. The Soviets too suffered quite a bit before they were successful in conquering Finland. They never conquered all of it, but they hacked off a huge section of Karelia and incorporated it into the Soviet Union. The United States, of course, was always trying to convince them that they didn't have to cower in front of the Soviets. It was easier for us to say than for them to do. I think they were quite successful in maintaining a remarkable degree of independence. But of course they did that by being particularly careful in not doing anything the Soviets would find disagreeable. The other side actually, the Swedes were doing exactly the opposite. Although their attachments to the west were quite clear, they were still neutral. I think it was self understood at that time that Swedish and Finnish neutrality were part of the peace process and formed a sort of "Cordon Sanitaire" between the two competing powers in Northern Europe.

Q: Was there a pro Russian party in Finland?

BARKLEY: Oh, yes. There was a Communist Party in Finland. That once again goes back to the period of time right after the Russian Revolution. There was a civil war in Finland between the reds and the whites. There was a war actually that the whites under Field Marshall Mannerheim won. There was a lot of bloodletting, but nonetheless, the ultimate result of that was there were still residual parts of the Communist Party. And of course, they had very close relations with the Soviet Union and were sort of part of the political process. Now, they would usually gain 15-20% of the vote but not enough to form a government. There was a social democratic party which was the same basic kind of composition you found in most parts of Northern and Central Europe as a matter of fact.

Q: Were there, you know earlier on there had been a large was it youth peace festival or something in Helsinki and all. Was this still the communist side, were they using this as sort of a showcase of various things while you were there?

BARKLEY: Well when I was there, actually the domestic problems were that the communist party had a difficult time because obviously the Soviet Union was pleased with the policy that was followed by President Kekkonen. Kekkonen was the leader of the Center Party agricultural party. He always had a coalition that basically supported him. So it was a case where the communists, getting their instructions from Moscow, to the extent that they did, and I think they did to a great extent, basically did not directly challenge the president and his policy because the policy lines were similar to theirs. The social democrats had more of a problem. The social democrats was a larger party. They also were trying to steer a course of non provocation towards the Soviets and at the same time to get voters without attacking the basic principles of Kekkonen, which all parties supported.

Q: How did we deal and operate within this system? Were we willing to accept this as the way it was and not pushing hard?

BARKLEY: Well as you perhaps recall, at the time none of us were terribly comfortable with the so-called neutral countries, although I think they had less problems with Sweden and Finland.

There was a certain amount of stability. But there was this neutral bloc that came up, But the bloc was never joined as far as I knew by...

Q: You are talking about the non aligned group.

BARCKLEY: Yes and that was of course, Tito and Nasser at that time, Nehru and Sukarno. But the political structure of course changed. The social democrats basically took over after Kekkonen's death. This happened much after I was gone, but we were trying to convince them all the time that you know they could open themselves more to American trade without any problems, but they were still very cautious. They didn't have a vigorous trade relationship with the United States.

Q: How did you find your contacts with the Finns? I would think that every ounce of their being would be towards the west in most of the people you would meet. The west represented the future or not to them.

BARCKLEY: Well I think that is true, but on the other hand they were living right next to the bear. That certainly got your attention. I don't think there was any question that their sympathies and indeed their political structure reflect a sympathy, not only a sympathy but a devotion to the democratic principles. But in the hard reality of politics they didn't want to do anything that would provoke the Soviets to take any counter measures. The Soviets had a base somewhere in the south, in Prokala. They would use this to put pressure on the Finns whenever they felt it was necessary. They were monitoring Finland very carefully. Then of course, they had a trade agreement with the Finns that was more lucrative for the Soviets than it was for the Finns, although it was part of the price the Finns paid, I think, to keep their neighbor happy. As a consequence of that you would see on the streets of Finland a lot of Moscowvitches and other Russian cars they could buy for a song actually, because they were part of the trade agreement.

Q: From what I gather we were not an overly active group getting out there and...

BARCKLEY: That is true. From what I saw that was certainly true. The station, however, was quite active, because as you can imagine there was a huge Soviet presence. That was of interest in terms of intelligence and things. We were more of a reporting post, and I think did that very well.

Q: Did you find yourself sort of the station was going active let us know if you find somebody who looks interesting or that sort of thing?

BARCKLEY: Well there was always the situation where if you encountered anything unique. I happened to have done exactly that with a U.S. trade commission that was there at the time. We had a rather large trade promotion. And the Soviets came and attended it and wanted to see a lot of things. In the process I met a young man, a young Finn who worked with Soviet import-export group, which of course was usually the cover for KGB activities. He invited me over to talk in his office on a number of things and the Soviets were quite shocked to find me there. I subsequently found out they said I was in the "Rat's Next," which meant the KGB operation there. The station was interested in what I had to say about how big the office was and how it

looked. Of course they knew where it was, but they had never been inside. So I blundered into something that was interesting. The other thing that we had which was quite interesting was periodically a Polish or eastern European ship of some sort would put in to Helsinki. There would always be a defector or two who would come out of that. The Finns were of course, under enormous pressure that if indeed they went to the Finnish police or something like that, they would be under pressure to turn them back. So they usually came to people in one of the western embassies. Then the standard procedure was we would put them on a train to Sweden. Once they got up into Sweden, then they would function fairly well. A couple of times, I remember one case they had a Pole who spoke German and he spoke nothing else. I was the only German speaker in the embassy with the possible exception of the ambassador who of course was out of town. They asked me to take him to the train station.

Q: How did you find Finnish society? The Swedes I am told are quite reserved. Are the Finns...

BARCKLEY: All the Scandinavians, all northern people, are fairly reserved. The Finns are positively shy, but they are hospitable, very nice people. They come from a rural background mostly. As you know, Finland was for a long time occupied by Sweden. Later on it was an archduchy of the Czar. The Czar was the archduke of Finland. So there was always a great Swedish element in their society. But with democracy there came a push towards more Finnish speakers. It was a country that had two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. Of course, the Finns which were the poorer cousins basically, the Swedes colonized the coastline and in the interior where the Finns were of course, they were fairly agrarian and rather poor. So as they made the transition into an independent society, the Finnish element being so large became of course the most active aspect of the political life.

Q: Did you get up into Lapland?

BARCKLEY: Oh, yes. I always try to get around. I did what I think most young foreign service officers did when I went to a country. I found out what literature was available. I read their history and all those things.

Q: Yes, I read the Kalavala.

BARCKLEY: The Kalavala. That is the national epic.

Q: I never did figure out what that mill was that the Sonpole or something like that. It was a magical mill or something.

BARCKLEY: You know it is an interesting thing the rhythm of the Kalavala is exactly the rhythm of Hiawatha. Longfellow knew Lönnrot, who was very much the great linguist who translated the Kalavala, actually wrote it down for the first time. It was an oral tradition. He got this rhythm because the oral tradition had two people speaking. One saying one sentence and the other responding. It came along like Hiawatha; "By the shores of Gitchee Gumee, By the shining big sea water." That was a connection that was novel to me. I didn't know that. They had quite a good culture and particularly in architecture and design. Alvar Alto was one of the great

architects and Saarinen of course. So there was really a terrific tradition in that area and of course in sports there were famous Finnish runners and skiers and walkers and so on.

Q: Were there any restrictions on talking to members of the Communist Party?

BARKLEY: There were no restrictions that I was aware of or were ever told to me except that of course, you should write down everything that was discussed. That was not only to make sure there was no misuse of the relationship that also that you protected yourself. The problem usually was the communists weren't particularly interested in talking to us. Now they did on occasion if we took a trip anywhere they would be represented in the political groupings that were there. They always were congenial. Most of them I think were continuing traditions and associations that went back to the civil war.

Q: How about when you were in the consular section, did you get a sort of a glimpse of Finnish migration to the United States. I mean historically I mean they had gone to the logging areas and the cold areas too like Wisconsin.

BARKLEY: Unlike other places in Scandinavia the interaction between the Finnish emigrant community and the home country was not particularly active. I knew, of course, a number of people in the United States of Finnish extraction including my aunt. But it was not nearly as aggressive a relationship as it is for example in Norway. There was always a certain amount of humor about the immigrants. They had a hard time learning English with Finnish as a background, but most of them of course, were laborers. Now an interesting thing was that when they emigrated they brought with them their political coloration. During that period of time that I was there, Key members of the American communist party were Finnish. That was not a surprise but that was an interesting development for us. During the time I was there, of course, two major events occurred from my perspective. First was the assassination of John F. Kennedy, I was actually in Sweden when it happened. I remember how horrified I was, and I couldn't get any information because all the papers were in Swedish. I was able to figure out through German more or less what had happened. I returned immediately and of course the embassy was in a total uproar, not knowing exactly what to do. Of course we put out the condolence book and people came by in droves. Kennedy, like in other countries, had touched an emotional vein in Finland. They were honestly impressed with his youth and his vigor and his charm. Of course the assassination was just a terrible thing, terrible blow. We also along with the Finnish government organized a major commemorative service for him in the cathedral which is in the center of the city. Among my tasks was to usher President Kekkonen and his wife to their seats. A small thing, but for a junior level officer it was quite a touching thing. It was a traumatic time.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia. Actually I was in Austria at the time it happened. I kept trying to find out what erschatzen meant. Was it killed or shot at, you know. It took a little while, but I came back and we had the same thing in a communist country, long lines. You go into a little marketplace in Tusla or something like that and you find little pictures in plastic with Kennedy in them. They would be sold.

BARKLEY: It certainly captured the imagination of the world. It was an amazing thing. President Kennedy's ambassador at that time was Carl Rowan, who was one of the first African

American ambassadors to be appointed. Rowan of course was a successful journalist at that time and even more successful later on. He came with his family. That was an enormous thing. The Finns loved him. He had great charm. He also captured their imagination. It was an exciting time.

Q: I would think so. He was one of the sort of bright stars in the...

BARCLEY: He was not only that. He was as you would expect utterly engaged in the civil rights movement. A lot of members of the civil rights movement did appear actually and visited him because he was there. That gave me the unique privilege of meeting some of them. It was a window on a part of America that I had to admit I didn't perfectly understand at that time. Of course he was a highly intellectual man with an enormous sense of humor which played extremely well even in the rather dour atmosphere of Finland. They took to him immediately. He was a remarkable guy.

Q: You were saying one other thing happened.

BARCLEY: Well, the other thing I recall very much was a visit by John Steinbeck.

Q: Oh, yes.

BARCLEY: Steinbeck had just won the Nobel Prize for Travels with Charley. He arrived with his wife. His program was put together by USIS. At that time he just came into Finland as many people did out of the Soviet Union where he had also been feted and wined and dined and of course they were extremely impressed at having him there. I had been trying to get the attention of our cultural affairs officer that they should try to get him to meet with the only Finnish Nobel Prize winner, a fellow by the name of Frans Eemil Sillanpaa. USIS told me that they did invite Sillanpaa to a reception in Steinbeck's honor. But I said, "Sillanpaa is a recluse. He won't leave his home. He lives right outside of Helsinki!"

So there was a little meeting in the embassy, and Steinbeck was there, and I was there with a friend of mine, Georgiana Prince, who was the financial officer at the embassy. We were very close friends. Somehow he came up and we talked. He asked me, "Do you think we have got a good program here?" I said, "I personally lamented the fact that he wasn't going out to see Sillanpaa, the Finnish Nobel Prize winner." He said, "Well why am I not doing that?" I said, "I am sorry sir, I am not in charge of the program, but if I were in charge of your program, I would put that high on your list." He said, "Well I want to do that. How do I go about it?" I said, "Well you just tell the Ambassador you want to do that." He said, "Should I tell him you said to?" I said, "Oh heavens no." If there is any way to get into trouble it is to go over another officer's head in the construction of his program. Well, he said, "I am going to do that," and he did. They both went out. Carl Rowan looked up and said, "Oh, God, this is tailor made." The visit took place, and I recall always with great satisfaction that it was on the front page of every newspaper in the country, including Kansan Uutiset, which was the biggest communist newspaper there. It was a great coup, and later on when he went home, he wrote about the meeting in the "New Yorker." I always felt that as a junior officer during my tour in Finland, that was the greatest single contribution I made.

Q: Did you get any glowers from the USA people?

BARKLEY: No, I don't think they ever knew. The only one that knew it was Georgiana who was sitting next to me when we talked about it. I think she told other people, but she wasn't going to go to the USIA and tell about that. That was an interesting thing. Then of course the follow up to the Kennedy assassination, I think the event that took over a large segment of our lives was the showing of the movie, "The Years of Light and Days of Drums." It was an extraordinary movie, a portrayal of President Kennedy's tenure. The embassy showed that around, and of course the organization of it was a major task. It was largely given to me to handle it. I worked on it for weeks and weeks. It was actually a labor of love because it was such an important thing.

Q: Yes. How about sort of on the cultural side. Did the Finns have sort of the same affinity that so many of the countries in Europe have towards American music, jazz, movies, this sort of thing?

BARKLEY: Oh, absolutely. Georgiana, once again my very close friend, was a great aficionado of ballet. Through her, I went to the ballet often and got to know a lot of the ballerinas. For all of them for them the height of achievement was to be selected to go to the United States and study under someone like Jerome Robbins. Classical ballet was one thing, but there was jazz ballet and other things in the United States that really caught their attention. There were jazz clubs all throughout Helsinki. It was a popular art form. The television played a number of American programs. They were subtitled so everybody could watch them easily. There was the usual mass appeal of American culture. But I think jazz was unique, it was a particular period of time, but in the '60s jazz had a particular cache throughout Europe.

Q: Jazz, I talked to someone who was doing cultural work in the Soviet Union later on. The man who broadcast the Voice of America, the jazz show. You know, stand up crowds everywhere.

BARKLEY: I remember Ray Charles came over while I was there. Oh my gosh, they really went crazy. And of course he is just a marvelous performer, and always made you feel good. You know American culture is often really cutting edge generally speaking I find personally, and a lot of people have a hard time making the adjustments to the new trends. Europeans are much more excited by this. Another thing, many of them, and certainly in this case in Finland, America is still the new country, the one who is making inroads. It is true we didn't have any Shakespeare or Schiller or Goethe, but in terms of modern culture, that is where things were happening. They admitted that, and there was great appeal to them.

MARGARET V. TAYLOR
Exchange Officer, USIS
Finland (1964-1966)

Margaret V. Taylor was born in 1925 in California. She joined the Information Service in 1951, served in Greece, Israel, Indonesia, Japan, Finland and in Washington. She was interviewed in 1990 by Lewis Schmidt.

TAYLOR: And from there, I was assigned to Finland, arriving there in about August or September of 1964. I was Exchanges Officer and, despite the fact that it's a very small country -- population-wise only about 4 ½ million -- they had a very large exchange program because Finland had been the only country in the world to pay off its post World War I debt to the U.S. The U.S. Congress, in appreciation for their honesty, decided to turn all of that money over to an educational exchange program. And then, in order not to penalize them, they also got a Fulbright program. So they had the full range of Fulbright and leader and specialist programs plus these additional monies accruing from the accumulation of this debt payment.

It was a very challenging job because I was solely responsible for it. I worked under a cultural officer but she, Tess Mravintz was focused entirely on the aspects of cultural programming. I worked with Finnish/American boards of directors, one for this Finnish debt program and a Fulbright board of directors responsible for the Fulbright program. In addition, I also helped to select and send off to the United States our parade of Finnish leaders going to the United States, and to help program the American lecturers who were coming to Finland under the regular American specialist program. It was very rewarding. The Finns initially are a very reserved people and it seems you have to be there for a while before you really can be accepted and get to know them. But then those contacts are very rewarding because they have a loyalty and a sincerity that makes for a significant relationship with the Finnish people.

Q: Who was the PAO at that time?

TAYLOR: The PAO was Steve Sestanovich. The other officers there were excellent. Jim Mays was press officer, a very hard-working, capable person, and Tess Mravintz was a very talented, hard-working cultural officer. We also had a couple of different press officers and an American secretary. But that was the extent of the staff there.

Our offices were right across the street from the Saarinen Railroad Station which was always an inspiration to look out on.

Q: You were separate from the embassy?

TAYLOR: Yes. Our offices were right downtown so it was much more convenient. We had our library there which Tess supervised and we had our lecture programs in the library so it was a good place for a USIS office.

The success of the exchange program is shown in the statistics that were then pertinent. Of the number of university professors in Finnish universities, one-third of them had been trained in American universities.

Q: Now, these are Finnish professors in the Finnish universities who were trained in the United States?

TAYLOR: Yes. Finland, at that time, was very much under the eye of the Soviet Union. It was that part of a buffer state that had not been taken into the Soviet Union as were Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It was a showcase for the Soviets to point to and say well, we didn't take in Finland, with which we're living peaceably.

Q: -- except that they did steal Karelia?

TAYLOR: They stole Karelia, a huge big piece of land along an 800-mile border. Finns who did not want to live under Russian rule for understandable reasons were all displaced.

The Finns were very much more in tune with the western world than with the Soviet Union, in terms of their democratic institutions, their whole attitude of freedom for the individual, and so on. So, the climate there also was a very favorable one for our USIS work, and we got a good turnout at all of our activities: for lectures by Americans, for film showings that we had at the library facility, for using press releases and working with the press. It was a happy climate to live in but also very satisfying personally because we all felt that we were helping them to keep their contact with the western nations. The Finns were suffering from a terrible rate of inflation because after the war they had to pay reparations to the Soviet Union and it was an enormous economic burden for them. But, as they had done with the U.S. loan after World War I, they simply set themselves to the task and went ahead and paid those reparations but at great economic cost to their own country. The Finns are a very admirable people. Despite the cold climate -- and I happen not to like cold weather -- there was a real feeling of warmth and of common interest. So that was really a very, very nice period indeed. 1966: Back in Washington at the Cultural Bureau (CU) in DepState

And then from there I went back to Washington for a period of some years and worked at the State Department in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Because of my experience in Finland, I was at that time assigned to the European Section of CU and worked on the Scandinavian programs.

HAVEN N. WEBB
Consular Section Chief
Helsinki (1967-1969)

Mr. Webb was born and raised in Tennessee. A Naval Academy graduate, Mr. Webb served with the US Navy overseas before joining the Foreign Service in 1961. A Political and Consular Officer, he served abroad in Guadalajara, Hamburg, Helsinki, Panama City and Tromso, Norway, where he was Officer in Charge. His Washington assignments concerned Political/Military Affairs, as well as International Organizations. Mr. Webb was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

WEBB: Anyway I went to the consul general and I said I wanted to go to Finland. I was just tired of playing games. I wanted to do political work. God knows why. He said, "I agree with you completely. I look up to you in effect for standing up. I think people like you should get out of the Foreign Service and do what you want to do." My wife had gone back. She was staying with family in Massachusetts. I don't know how, I was never very handy at breaking up homesteads, but I was prepared to go. Then that fateful day a few days later, he called me up and said, "Maybe you don't have to resign after all." There was an admin officer in Frankfurt who said, "Oh, he doesn't have to resign. Just tell Washington you are going to go to Finland, and they are just going to have to accommodate you and stick to your guns and refuse to cross the Atlantic until they agree," which I thought was a little crazy. But by that time I thought the foreign service was not quite the organization that we knew, that very publicly said with a wife you get two for one. We send you where we need you. We try to meet your requests, but the good of the service is what determines where you go, period. Which is exactly what we understood in the navy, which is the only way, I think, you can run such a diplomatic service or anything else like that in the government.

I did, and Washington said, "Come back and we will discuss it." I said, "Oh, think of all the money it will cost you shipping all my effects across the Atlantic. Then you are going to have to ship it right back." Lo and behold, I wrote a letter requesting a special detachment to go to the University of Helsinki. I was going to do original research on Soviet relations or something. I already studied Finnish and I could say [inaudible] which is the first thing I ever learned in Finnish which I think means steamship leaves Hamburg for Helsinki or something. Which is about all I knew after two years of once a week Finnish, Swedish, and Russian, taught in German. Lo and behold they said, "Come back and we will put you in FSI and give you the full Finnish language course, and then you will go back and be head of the consular section." Apparently they pulled my predecessor out a year ahead and instead of three years or whatever he thought he was going to get, he got two. I replaced him and I got two instead.

Q: How did you find Finnish as a language? It has a reputation of being very difficult.

WEBB: Finnish is I think the easiest language possibly there is to be a non-Indo-European language. It looks impossible. It is an agglutinative language whereas English is almost pure analytical, Chinese being the best example of an analytical language which, if I remember the definition, means in Chinese every word simply consists of a core word. There are no declensions. There are no conjugations. You simply use adverbs and adjectives to make your meaning clear. Whereas in Finnish, a little bit like Russian, you have incredible long verb forms that say things that in English you would only say in a participle phrase. That is true sometimes, but even a secondary clause or something. Of course it is famous because it has 16 cases whereas English has three, more or less, and Spanish two or so. German four, and Russian eight. Finnish has 16, but Finnish doesn't have prepositions. It has a couple of postpositions but no prepositions. Basically where we use prepositions, they use case endings to nouns. That is pretty much the same with Hungarian, which proves that they are related because there is not much in vocabulary that proves it. It is _____ in Finnish to say if you are sitting in a car it is "altos." If you are going to the car it is probably "alto ray." If you are getting into the car it is perhaps "aldoran." If you want to say into my car it is "altonuri". If you want to say sitting in my car "alpossri" and so on. It is really simple. It is also a language that for 800 years was

overshadowed by Swedish, and it obviously absorbed a lot of Swedish and Germanic grammar, Latin grammar. Therefore it seems once you get over the basic hurdles, it is not as foreign as you first thought. Plus there are a heck of a lot of loan words in Finnish, though they do come under strange rules because a Finnish word can never begin with one consonant. So "Stroan," which in German or Swedish means beach, I think, becomes "rwanta," which makes perfectly good sense to a Finn, and Stockholm becomes "Tukholm." There are a lot of words like that. Then like German and Russian to a large degree, the international words are simply the same. They are simply translations of the international words. Where we say as do the French and most of the Latin, we say international in some form or another, the Germans say it and even write it in develt, but they are not supposed to say it. The Russians maybe under Stalin, they came up with _____ which means exactly the same thing.

Q: Interpeople.

WEBB: The Finns have the same thing. I can't even remember what that is Consalite or something. You could learn and sort of translate, and plus the Finns know the international words too, particularly the educated Finns.

Q: Well you were there in '67 I guess.

WEBB: I was there two years, '67 to '69 with a year in the States learning Finnish. This was a situation that rather disturbed me. No I guess it wasn't Finnish. I guess it was Norwegian. The situation of personality that always amazed me.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

WEBB: Tyler Thompson, who was I think the same class as George Kennan. I don't know, I have never heard of him dying. He could not be less than 95 or 100 by now. The last I heard, he was sailing his boat with Ruth, his sailboat up and down the Maine coast. As nice a person as you will ever find. I don't want to select him but I was shocked. I think he had been there five years as ambassador, but maybe only three and five by the time I left. Well he was replaced before I left. [ed note. Thompson served in Finland July 1964 to June 1969] Once steaming around one of Finland's 10,000 lakes, we were just chatting. I always like to come up with theory, and since I had read everything I could possibly find in English on Finland and to some degree on Scandinavia, I had lots of theories. My main theory, which I thought was rather unique, was that Finland had always hated and feared and distrusted the Russians, but that it was actually non-Russians that always let the Finns down. It was Napoleon that sold or gave Finland to Russia in whatever it was, 1809, because Sweden had backed the anti-Napoleonic coalition. It was Hitler that sold out the Finns in 1939 and '40 because of the deal with Stalin. They had been utterly sure the French would never allow Russia to occupy Finland or that Germany would never allow the Soviet Union to occupy.

I was making the point of how the war had started September 1, 1939. The invasion of Finland was November 30. He said, "Oh no that is wrong. Stalin invaded Finland before WWII started," It made absolutely no sense because until you had the Stalin-Hitler pact of late August of '39, they were theoretically more or less enemies. I found this over and over. I never got much

feeling that people read very much. They were usually pretty good about reading up on their new assignment, but they never seemed to read much thereafter. I was always just absorbed in reading everything.

Q: Well what was the situation in this '67 to '69 period? What was sort of the political economic situation in Finland?

WEBB: Finland was doing very well. They certainly were not in the top ten or whatever they are like today. But Finland was progressing very rapidly. I think a lot of Finns back then probably would have said that the Russian connection by which they sold 2/3 of their exports or even more to the Russians, and imported vast amounts, mostly raw materials. They were forced to buy two Soviet nuclear reactors. I don't know if these were Chernobyl types, probably were, but they had the good sense to put container domes over them and all kinds of western safety features. As far as I know those two nuclear power facilities are pretty much as safe as anything in the West. I used to always feel they were just too quick, they anticipated Russian objections and would go out of their way to meet Russian demands before they became demands. The Social Democratic party that had always been the rock, solid rock opposition to the Soviet occupation had become to me almost like a Quisling party. But who can say; it all worked out very well. Almost like Willy Brandt who was on his knees to the Poles who recognized East Germany. I had very grave doubts about that, and I am the first to say, in the long run, our recognition of East Germany doesn't seem to have done any harm. Not because of anything that the Germans did or didn't do, but because the Soviet Union under Gorbachev changed and committed suicide.

Q: What were you doing there in Finland?

WEBB: I was the head of the Consular Section. It was a one man section. I had three or four local assistants. We did, of course, everything. We had a case where a German woman had married an American, lived in Texas, gotten divorced and nine months later produced a child. I was trying to explain very delicately to her that we didn't care if she was legally married to her husband when she had the child or whether she was legally married to her husband when the child was conceived. All we cared about was who was the genetic father of that child. I really had no way to avoid pressing the question. She blushed a little bit and said, they didn't have any money and after they broke up and she was waiting to go back to Germany she had no place to stay so she continued to live in the house with him, and she blushed again, and said, "We weren't always fighting." I wrote it all up and the State Department eventually came back and we gave that kid American citizenship. We certainly kept people busy. Most of it I suppose was visa work. The first year I was there it was under the old system. Finland had a quota of, I have forgotten, a couple of hundred, which we never filled, and which was 90% filled by young women who were going to "au pair" or something. But of course with a visa, an immigrant visa, they could do anything. We never knew but we estimated probably half of them stayed and half of them came back. I have always thought the Finns made as good immigrants as anybody. The next year the law changed. Finland had no more quota. At least while I was there I think we pretty much continued to issue about the same number of visas.

I had a citizenship case that really amazed me. It was a young girl who had gone over, I really can't remember, maybe under the "au pair" program, not an immigrant. She had met a young

man; they had gotten married. She got pregnant. She wanted to have the baby with her mother in attendance. She came back to Finland. He wrote her. She started to get on an airplane. They told her, "You have to have documentation. You don't have anything." She went to the American Embassy. She wrote the young man. She didn't get very many replies. He apparently had lost interest, and eventually she heard nothing more from him. There she was with what seemed to be an American baby. She was going to stay in Finland. At least at that time all the Europeans in my experience always wanted American citizenship because they would say they knew what it was like in the '40s and '39 when everybody was going to get to America. They wanted their kid to have every opportunity. Eventually going on a few pictures, she didn't know the names of his relatives; she had no addresses. I think she was telling the truth and all. She gave me a few pictures of him in an Air Force uniform and eventually the State Department accepted the citizenship appeal. But it just amazed me how casual people can be with their lives.

Q: Did Germany pose protection and welfare problems, Americans getting in trouble and all this?

WEBB: The biggest thing, it wasn't Americans getting in trouble. The biggest thing we had was Americans demanding visas to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union as best I can remember had a policy that nobody got in on a tourist visa. They always wanted to go to St. Petersburg or Leningrad. Well it used to be the Finnish border was in the Leningrad suburbs. Now it has been pushed back 50 miles or 100 miles. They always wanted to go for a weekend, and they just couldn't understand. You know, I would try to explain you have to go to the Soviets. It is their business.

My Russian counterpart was a KGB agent. He was very friendly. As I said, we used to meet for lunch occasionally, and I would send people over to him, and I would call him up, and he would say, "Send them over." I never saw these people again so I assumed they got their visas or they got shanghaied. Until, now I never knew why he was doing this. Was it to butter me up? I don't know what reason, but we had a senior official, our DCM, Harry Shuloff, who was the second DCM there. He was of the old school, and he was very nervous about my contact with this Soviet official. He used to say things like, "What's going to happen in a few years when you are up for you confirmation as ambassador to some country and somebody asks why did you used to meet this KGB agent month to month. Doesn't that bother you?" thinking of the McCarthy era. Well it didn't bother me or anybody my age. We always thought McCarthyism was a big joke. I never knew anybody who took it seriously in the Navy or the State Department.

I said, "I made out the written report just like we are supposed to do every time I met him." Now these reports were nothing more than we talked about the weather in Russian. The only thing that ever got very controversial was the time I was supposedly speaking Russian and I said a word. He said, "No, no, Haven, that is wrong. That is not the word you mean." He kept trying to define the word because he didn't know English. I said, "Oh you mean traitor." The only sentence I could think of in Russian that I could say was, "Do you think Trotsky was a traitor?" Obviously they used to tell me how the Russians felt so bad over our problems in Vietnam. When I pulled the Trotsky thing on him he would only say, "That was a long time ago." We don't know exactly who did what to whom back then. But the secret thing was that when you were all set up, your Soviet counterpart and your KGB agent were supposed to ask you to pick mushrooms out in the

country. Then you would have a big picnic and they would drug you and you would wake up in bad with God knows whom, and then they would blackmail you. That was supposedly the pattern.

But a funny thing happened in '68. The Russians invaded Czechoslovakia. That year, we always had what we called America Day every year I think, or every five years, I don't know. We only did it once I think. It just so happened that the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. George Kennan, believe it or not, was our speaker. This happened the night before. He just threw away his speech and talked extemporaneously about his heartbreaking terrible thing that had happened. We were supposed to refuse invitations to the Soviet Embassy, not to give any, to snub the Soviets. The very day after the invasion I think it was, an irate American came in and said, "You can get me into the Soviet Union for the weekend. I know you just call the Soviet embassy and they do anything you want. I have heard that." I flatly refused. I said, "We have no contact with the Soviets right now. You realize what happened. They just invaded Czechoslovakia. Do you think I am going to ask them on the behalf of the United States government for a favor?" "I don't care what happened in Czechoslovakia. I want to go to the Soviet Union." I reported this at a staff meeting thinking that everybody would say good work, Webb. The same DCM said, "I don't know why you didn't call up your counterpart." I did eventually run into him somewhere, and believe it or not, the last thing that I can remember that he ever said to me was, "Why don't we go mushroom picking in the countryside?" I was so disgusted I never reported that. I never saw him again.

Q: How did you find contact with the Finns you and your wife?

WEBB: We loved Finland; we loved the Finns. I think you probably heard people say that Russians are more like Americans in many ways than any other Europeans, you know sort of the open frontier spirit or something like that. I think it is even more so with the Finns. The Finns have such a terrible history. After all, they fought the Russians twice in WWII and the Germans once. They had a greater percentage of their population killed in WWII than any other country except Poland and Russia and maybe Germany. They had no illusions. During the Vietnam debacle while we were there, the Finnish reaction was far less. It didn't begin to compare to the "Hate Americanism" that Sweden and the Olaf Palmes were engendering. Even the Norwegians and the Danes were going along with that. Though I do remember one thing that really shocked me, Helsinki Sanomat which is the way I learned my Finnish memorizing tutorials. The New York Times of Finland and the writing at that time and sort of the stuffy Germanicized non oral type of Finnish, did a weekend supplement that the entire nation awaited with bated breath. It was an article about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam by a very famous Finnish philosopher. He was not a political scientist or historian or anything relevant, but he was a great man supposedly. All I could get out of his article was that we were in Vietnam because of their resources, their oil wealth, things of that nature. What did we spend three four, five hundred billion dollars, trillions by today's money solely because Vietnam had these wonderful mineral resources that nobody has ever seen to this very day? I was just dumbfounded. But the Finnish press treated his comments you know, almost as if God, Umalah which is the Allah to the Finn, Umalah himself, God had spoken those words. But it didn't have a big influence on anything we did. There may have been some minor protests, but the protests at the Soviet Embassy after the Czech invasion

were much greater than anything we ever experienced, if we experienced any at all. I don't really remember.

The Finns were very pro American. They had a very high immigration. Also they had the most left wing emigration. Finns voted Communist in the United States to a greater degree and longer than any other ethnic group, or so I have read. It was only WWII that finally healed the wounds, and the communists who supported the Soviet Union and Stalin almost to the day the war broke out were treated by Mannerheim and the Finnish army as loyal citizens and to almost a man they proved to have been so in combat. To their great heroism.

Q: I think of the Finns ending up in Minnesota and Wisconsin, the Dakotas and all that. Did you run into reflections of that in your work?

WEBB: Yes, we did in the attachés. Of course we had a full ensemble of attachés. In our experience the military attaches were either hopeless in learning Finnish and using Finnish, or they were third and fourth generation and knew a little Finnish, and loved the opportunity. At one time both our senior naval attaché and his assistant had a Finnish background. That fellow whose name I forget, with a pretty young wife, told me one time how he had been invited by distant relatives to stay with them out in the country somewhere. Of course he was using all the Finnish he could possibly muster; his wife didn't speak Finnish, and he asked at one point where the bathroom was. Everybody just laughed and laughed, because what he had said is where is the outhouse? Because when the Finns left Finland in 1900, there were no bathrooms, not for 99% of them I suspect. But of course, all of that changed and the vocabulary changed accordingly.

We loved Finland, and it was a marvelous experience to be there for two years. We had a very active Finnish-American society. We used to do things, sports events and things. I had done a little bit of skiing in Vermont to the point where I almost could handle parallel skiing, but I had never done cross country. I was doing a little bit in Finland right out of our back door in what was called Westend which is over by Copial on the west side of town. On one of these visits we had a three kilometer run where you went up on in the hills on your cross-countries. You ended up on a vertical abyss down to the lakeshore. And then you had to go to where they had a hole in the ice where you would later go swimming.

I think the Canadian ambassador had lost his skis and was trouncing through the snow. I would never have gone down this incredibly steep slope except I had to. All these 60 year olds - our ambassador did it, and he was 60 at least by then. I did it, and my skis clattered like nothing I have ever heard before, but I stayed on them until I hit the ice, and then I went splat, but I didn't break anything and got up. Then later three times we went out wearing nothing from the sauna. My experience is that when your ears hurt so much they feel like they are going to burn off, then you leave the sauna, you run through the snow. It just feels wonderful. You strategically drop your towel on a ladder stuck in the ice. You jump in, and it feels wonderful for five seconds, and then you start freezing, and you get out. I assure you if you forgot your towel on the way out, you would never go back to retrieve it. Everybody is standing there watching you. The third time I did it, I don't know why I didn't have a heart attack, the ambassador's wife stopped me for a little conversation. I am standing there in my towel in about a foot of snow barefoot. I was about to die, but I excused myself and ran. But none of the women went except for a couple of them,

well one Scandinavian. She was married to our political officer, which was strange because he was an American raised in Sweden, and she was a Swede raised in America. They had married. I was in the hot room, the sauna. He came in and said, "Anything going on?" and I just looked out to see his wife who frankly was very flat-chested, running up I guess carrying a towel that was somewhat strategically located. I said nothing, and he went out and took a peek and I left.

The rumor was that the Swedo-Finns, the tiny percent of the population that used to be 15% and would undoubtedly be 90% except for Napoleon, just like Wales and Scotland and Ireland were Celtic speaking 200 years ago and now almost completely English speaking except for the Welsh for some reason, I know not why. I think it is down to five or six percent, and they are a very definite minority. But supposedly we are told that among young Swedes, they went to the sauna, they did not divide. They went by age group and not by sex, which is the way they did it traditionally in the country. The serving wenches had to beat the master of the farm with the birch branches or whatever it was. What you got in a hotel, the women had to be I think at least 30, and I think had to be rather plain to have that job. But they were very thorough.

EDMUND MURPHY
Country Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Finland (1968-1973)

Edmund Murphy spent three years in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946. His career as a Foreign Service Officer with USIS has included positions in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Haiti, and Finland. Mr. Murphy was interviewed by Allen Hansen on January 30, 1990.

Q: In October 1968 you went to Helsinki, again, as Country Public Affairs Officer. Again, a real change from your prior assignment. Did you have to learn Finnish?

MURPHY: Well, I didn't have to. But from the day I arrived there until the day I left I took Finnish lessons and I did learn enough to be a little bit sociable in Finnish. It isn't a language that you could acquire on short notice it's just too complicated.

Q: It has some Central European Association.

MURPHY: It's related to Hungarian, but distantly, but Estonian is understandable to Finns. Finnish is not related to any Scandinavian language, except that Finland belonged to Sweden for 600 years, and Swedish is an official language in Finland. The Lithuanians listen to the Finnish broadcast which is where they got many of their democratic ideas.

Q: What was USIS doing in those days in Finland?

MURPHY: Well, we were doing a traditional USIS program. We had big services to the radio stations of which there were many and which still represented a very important medium in Finland. With the emerging television, there were two companies. There was the government

owned and operated television and then there was a private firm which accepted advertising and did its own financing. We serviced the press and we had a good book translation program in Finland. The Finns are great readers. So those programs were very effective with the Finns.

Q: And I imagine it was a favorable climate, I mean, just speaking of the relationships between the Finns and the Americans which was a pleasant relationship.

MURPHY: It was a most pleasant relationship. I think the countries where I found the people most outgoing and friendly were Mexico and Finland. In other countries, I don't mean to say they were unfriendly, but there was a reserve that you didn't find in Mexico or Finland. Of course, we had the library in Helsinki, too, which we used as a kind of cultural center because we did a lot of programming there in addition to library work. It had what could be converted into an assembly hall and we had lectures and movies, cultural program in general.

In Finland we had astronauts too. We had Buzz Aldren and Collins and Richard Gordon again whom I had already known in Colombia. That again was a very exciting time. Then we had America days with the Finnish American society every year in a different city of Finland. They moved around because there were societies in almost every town of importance. And later on we had William Anders, another astronaut, come to be the principal speaker for American days because after the moon landing there was so much interest in Finland in those astronauts. And as you may know, President Reagan later appointed William Anders Ambassador to Denmark. I think he has another ambassadorial assignment now.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that. Well, upon your return to Washington in February, 1973, you were then assigned as a Senior Inspector, right?

MURPHY: That's right.

Q: Do you want to tell us anything about that assignment?

MURPHY: Well, the last thing I'd like to say about Finland is that I was there through the Salt III talks on strategic arms limitations, and that was a real adventure too. Because for the first time I got inside of the Russian Embassy. That Embassy was a big luxurious enclosed block within a classic building across the street from my apartment. I could look over at it from where I lived. It was something that the Russians had made the Finns build and give them as part of war reparations and foreigners seldom got in there. But during the SALT talks, part of the talks were at the American Embassy and part at the Russian Embassy. Not only did we get into the Embassy, but the Soviet diplomats became very chummy with us at that time. The Russian Cultural Attaché took me to lunch, and the normal chill thawed a little. I went to the final social occasion celebrating the closing of these talks at the Russian Embassy. They didn't allow in any photographers, but I always carried a camera and nobody bothered me. And I got the only picture there was of the two heads of delegations, plus the Russian Ambassador and the American Ambassador.

Q: Who was heading the American delegation?

MURPHY: Gerard Smith. I've got two whole albums of pictures that Ned Norris gave me of those talks and activities.

DAVID J. DUNFORD
Economic/Commercial Officer
Helsinki (1969-1972)

Ambassador Dunford was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and Connecticut. He was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University and the National Institute of Aerospace Technology of Spain. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966 Mr. Dunford became an economic, commercial and trade specialist serving in Washington, Helsinki, Cairo (Economic Minister-Counselor) and Riyadh (Deputy Chief of Mission). In 1992 he was appointed Ambassador to Muscat, where he served until 1995. Ambassador Dunford was interviewed by Elisabeth Raspolic in 2006.

Q: At that time were there many language designated positions at the embassy in Helsinki or were you one of the very modest handful when you were at that?

DUNFORD: There were not many. I think I was the only one in the economic-commercial side. John Owens's position was language designated and there was at least one other officer in the embassy who spoke Finnish quite fluently.

Q: Was it a large mission?

DUNFORD: No.

Q: Larger than Quito?

DUNFORD: Smaller

Q: Oh, that surprises me.

DUNFORD: To be frank, Finland was the least challenging of any post I served in.

Q: How so?

DUNFORD: The interesting work was pretty much done by the Agency because of our proximity to the Soviet Union. The ambassador, virtually all of the time I was there, was Val Peterson, a former governor of Nebraska.

Q: So you had a non-career ambassador.

DUNFORD: Non-career ambassador. The deputy chief of mission was Jimmy Lewis, who was a GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) expert. Lewis was about to retire and was not too energetic. The other senior officers were not all that energetic either. My sense, no doubt exaggerated, was that I was doing about half the work in the embassy without completely filling out a nine-to-five day. I did find it very interesting to work on the nuclear power sector in Finland. Finland had two Soviet-supplied nuclear power plants. A private Finnish consortium had been formed to build a third plant and the consortium was intent on getting the technology from the West. U.S. companies were actively competing.

Q: The private consortium was all Finnish?

DUNFORD: Yes. It was called Teollisuuden Voima Oy (Industrial Power Company). I built good relationships with the Finnish nuclear power officials and learned a lot about the subject. Having a technical background gave me a leg up. Various U.S. suppliers were constantly visiting, trying to sell their wares. General Electric, Westinghouse and Combustion Engineering were the three U.S. companies bidding. A Swedish company eventually ended up winning the bid. It was nevertheless a very interesting experience for me.

I also did a lot of reporting on what the Finns were doing with the environment, an issue that was ahead of its time. I did a lengthy report on Finnish state owned companies. I mention that only because one of them was Nokia, which has since gone from an obscure state owned Finnish company to a fairly important world company.

Q: Yes indeed. Were you- in the structure of the embassy were you working directly with the DCM or were you one of many in the economic section? Or how was the-

DUNFORD: There were three of us doing economic-commercial work so I worked for both the economic counselor and the commercial attaché. Most of my work was economic work but there was some commercial work. I also was the backup consular officer. If the lone consular officer was traveling or sick I would spend part of the day in the consular section signing visas and handling issues.

Q: How was it having a non-career ambassador with a career DCM- I mean, how did that relationship work, or were you even aware of it at your level?

DUNFORD: I interacted quite a bit with Val Peterson. He was a very likeable guy. He had his issues; one was the Finnish media. He kept trying to reform the Finnish media which persisted in criticizing the United States, particularly over Vietnam, and was hardly ever critical of the Soviet Union. Finns in those days had a basic policy: they had lost every war with Russia, the Soviet Union, over the years and they were not going to lose another one. They were not going to have any foreign policy issues with the Soviets and in return the Soviets were supposed to keep their hands off Finnish society. As a result, the Finnish media did not criticize the Soviet Union but felt free to criticize the United States. Peterson thought that was totally unfair and constantly ranted and raved to the point where I think he was no longer welcome in certain offices.

Q: I was going to ask if he made any progress.

DUNFORD: No. He did not. His other interesting trait was to obsess about Embassy security long before it came into fashion. He had the windows coated with Mylar; he put up security cameras. When I left, there was talk of bringing in guards with dogs. The only security threat I know of was an occasional march against the Vietnam War, but the Finnish authorities always kept the marchers away from the embassies. Overall, Helsinki was one of the safer places I have been in my life.

Q: Did you have a Marine guard, security guard at the embassy?

DUNFORD: I do not believe we had Marine Security Guards.

Q: Interesting.

DUNFORD: I might be wrong. No, I do not believe we had Marines in Helsinki. I recall we had them in Ecuador. In Ecuador we did have security issues.

Q: How did you deal with the issue of Vietnam in the background while you were stationed in Western Europe where clearly Vietnam was not approved, our actions in Vietnam? I mean, you were there in Helsinki, I think probably you went right after TET (Tet Mau Than Offensive) and it was quite a ferocious time while you were in Helsinki. Did this enter into your- the way you conducted your business?

DUNFORD: You know, because I was doing economic work and not really interacting on the political side at all I felt under no particular pressure on Vietnam. I did have a lot of Finnish acquaintances and occasionally they would try to stir me up on Vietnam; I just tried to avoid the subject if at all possible. My own views were that Vietnam was turning into a disaster. I probably held those views even before I joined the Foreign Service. I never felt, as some did in those days, that I needed, in order to maintain my personal integrity, to resign because I simply was not called on very often to defend our Vietnam policy. It became a little trickier later in life when I was in the Middle East.

Q: I can understand.

Did you have a chance when you were in Helsinki to travel in the region much?

DUNFORD: I did. Let me see, where did I go? First of all, Scandinavia has a high incidence of suicide and the reason appears to be that it is very dark, particularly early in the winter before the snow comes. So November is considered the worst month; actually in Finnish it means "death month."

Q: Oh my.

DUNFORD: Snow has not come yet so there is just nothing to reflect light. In December the snow might not have come yet but it is Christmastime and everybody is busy celebrating so it is okay.

My first November, we put our car on the ferry and went to Bremerhaven, Germany and drove around Europe. Sandy was quite pregnant and this pregnancy was successful; our child was born February 1970.

Q: In Helsinki?

DUNFORD: In Helsinki.

Q: That is great.

DUNFORD: She gave birth at the Katilopisto, which means “midwife’s school.” Not a very reassuring name but it was very professional.

Q: Just lucky it went well.

DUNFORD: It did not go perfectly but it went alright.

So in November we drove as far south as Venice and Florence and back through Switzerland and Germany to Bremerhaven. So that was a good trip. The next spring I went to Poland for a week because a good friend of mine was assigned to Warsaw. I went by ship from Helsinki to Leningrad and back; just a long weekend. I also traveled to Stockholm once on official business. We had an inspection while I was in Helsinki and one of the inspectors recommended I learn how another Embassy functioned. So I set up a short visit to Embassy Stockholm. Both Sandy and I went to Moscow by train. Another friend from the A100 class was stationed in Moscow. He arranged for us to fly to Tbilisi and Sochi.

Q: That is quite far south. Did any of these travels-

DUNFORD: We also went two times to Greece on *Aurinkomatgat* (Sun Tours) charter flights. Traveling with a planeload of Finns can be pretty crazy because Finns do drink.

Q: Did any of these travels inspire you to do bid on other places in Europe in future go arounds?

DUNFORD: Well, I knew my next assignment was Washington.

Q: Oh you did?

DUNFORD: Washington was a given since my first two assignments were overseas. I was not really thinking much beyond Washington. I ended up staying in the U.S. for nine years.

Q: It is unusual.

DUNFORD: It was pretty good for the family in many ways but it was unusual; eight years was the limit. For the ninth year I got a dispensation from the Secretary of State to work at USTR (United States Trade Representative’s Office).

Q: Right, right. I noticed from your postings that you had spent a chunk of time in Washington and I assumed that you had been up against the wall a _____.

DUNFORD: One other important thing about Finland before we leave. Well, two other things. My son was born in Finland. Right after my son was born I went with two Finns, the ambassador's driver and a friend of his, and Ed Howatt, our commercial attaché. We drove to Akaslompolo.

Q: When you get it back for review you can correct the spelling.

DUNFORD: Akaslompolo is right up above the Arctic Circle, and we skied cross country for ten days. We came back to the village each evening. It was a very memorable vacation. Of course, it was great for conditioning. But the problem was all they had to eat there was reindeer meat. It was pretty good the first day and not so bad the fourth day and I swore never to eat it again by the tenth day. The skiing was great; it was a very stark but very beautiful landscape.

Second and also important was that we adopted our daughter in Finland. When my son was born it became apparent my wife could not have any more children so we started looking immediately for adoption possibilities. An opportunity presented itself faster than we expected, because adoption is not a big thing in Finland. The agency was Pelastakaa. The woman who interviewed us kind of nervously asked me, are you foresighted? I said foresighted? What do you mean? And she still looked kind of nervous so I said well, say it in Finnish. The word, while literally in Finnish it means "thinking ahead," is better translated as "prejudiced."

Q: Foresighted; how interesting.

DUNFORD: We said not that we knew of. She explained that the girl had a gypsy father. The word for gypsy in Finnish literally translates as black. Gypsies are often discriminated against in Scandinavia. We said we were delighted to have a half-gypsy daughter. She is now a high school teacher here in Tucson.

Q: That is wonderful.

DUNFORD: So both our children were born in Finland.

**JOHN P. OWENS
Political Counselor
Helsinki (1969-1971)**

**Finland and Sweden Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1972-1974)**

John P. Owens was born in the District of Columbia in 1927. As a Foreign Service officer he served in Italy, Venezuela, Greece, Finland, Sweden, Bermuda and Washington. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You went to Helsinki, didn't you, from '69 to '71.

OWENS: That's right. I opted for Finnish training, and from '68 to '69, I was in Finnish training, and then went as Political Counselor to Helsinki. The Ambassador had been Tyler Thompson, but by the time I arrived it was Val Peterson, former governor of Nebraska who had been in Eisenhower's cabinet. He was a very interesting and jovial politician whom I liked. I served there for two years. The government in power was a center party, primarily agriculturally based and the president was Urho Kekkonen. I served there two years and then went to Princeton for senior training.

Q: What were the American interests in Finland at the time?

OWENS: It was quite a contrast after serving in Greece, where we were so much in the picture and such a power behind the scenes. In Finland, you'd have to say that it was the Soviet Union that had considerable clout and was a power behind the scenes. It took some adjusting to realize that, although we were important symbolically for Finland, we didn't... Since Finland was not in NATO, Finland was a neutral country. It had a treaty of peace and friendship with the Soviet Union, and had to mind its p's and q's very much with the Soviets, their big neighbor to the south and east, so that it was an interesting experience to see the contrast. We were of course important for the Finns, not so much in trade, but as a kind of symbolic other force which served as a counterweight to the Soviets. The Finns themselves were not at all pro-Soviet, as one might expect, having had a number of wars with the Soviets, with Russia and later with the Soviet Union. Two times, they fought during the World War II period, a Winter War and then a Continuation of War which they lost, although I believe they were one defeated country during World War II which was not actually occupied. So, that was a great benefit to them. Although the Soviets did occupy a couple of bases, they did not occupy the country as a whole, and take over the government. In the years after the war Finland did a remarkable job of meeting the Soviet reparations requirements, which in term freed up the base areas that the Soviets occupied. So the Finns, in private, were extremely friendly and quite pro-American. It is interesting to note...I remember reading the statistics at the time, that of the numbers studying foreign languages, (other than Swedish which is not considered a foreign language) that 85% studied English, another 5%, German, and 4%, French, and then less than about 1% studied Russian, which I think was an indication how people felt.

It was a rather uneventful tour. It gave me an inside into Scandinavian, specifically Finnish politics. It had none of the excitement of service in Greece. In fact, as I look back now, as we talk, I guess that the high point of my career was really serving as a junior officer in Greece.

Q: Well, I think that this is true for many of us. You take your peaks and lows where they come for the excitement level.

OWENS: Exactly.

Q: Did you get any flak from the Finns regarding the Vietnam War? The Swedes were adamant on this.

OWENS: Relatively little. As you probably know, I served subsequently in Sweden as political counselor, in Stockholm, so I was able later to make a contrast. No. In contrast to the Swedes who did not have a Soviet problem, the Finns had this problem of coping every day with the Soviet Union, trying to maintain their neutrality against Soviet pressure. Finland was not the rich country that Sweden was, to afford the kind of luxury of worrying about South Africa and Vietnam. We did have an occasional, listless type of demonstration outside the Embassy. It never got out of hand, never a major problem. And the Finns were very scrupulous at the United Nations, in sitting on their hands on every dispute between East and West. They would not vote with the Soviets. They generally abstained on East-West issues. They handled the Korean problem for example by not recognizing either regime when I was there. It was not until a Social Democratic government came in some years after I left that they eventually did recognize both Koreas. We had very little flak from the Vietnam War. I think most Finns wished us out of there primarily for our benefit and the world benefit of our being disengaged, but they were not critical of us, at least, not except from a pro forma basis. The Finnish diplomatic interest during that time was focused on convening a conference on security and cooperation in Europe, and that was something for which they pushed very hard, and which they eventually were to realize. The Foreign Minister, Ahti Karijalainen, was very keen on building up Helsinki as an international center. This was very important for them to make more legitimate their neutrality. They wanted to achieve the status of Geneva, or Vienna, for Helsinki, because they felt that their neutrality was...while they were firmly persuaded of it, committed to it, that the Soviets might not always respect it. They wanted to build up a kind of international acceptance of Finland's neutral role. I remember often presenting the Finnish case to our people in the European bureau. Although Finland was part of the European bureau, since it was not a part of NATO, it was really pretty much out of the center of action. My job was trying to persuade them to look benignly upon Finnish requests to enhance their neutrality. There wasn't a great deal of interest, particularly among people rather who took a very hard line and felt that anyone who wasn't a hundred percent with us was against us. It was after I left Finnish, and the year of Senior Training at Princeton, that I became desk officer for Finland and Sweden.

Q: You were doing this from '72 and '74. What were the main issues you dealt with?

OWENS: Sweden was the main issue, again. It was during the period that we interrupted our relations with Sweden. We didn't actually break off relations with Sweden. In '72, during December 1972, the B-52s bombed Hanoi. Olaf Palme was then Prime Minister of Sweden, denounced this as an atrocity, worse than the massacre at Sharpeville.

Q: Which happened in South Africa?

OWENS: In South Africa, yes. I remember a Saturday afternoon in December being called in to the State Department, along with Scott George who was our Office Director of the Bureau of

Northern European Affairs, and with U. Alexis Johnson, and we called in the Swedish Ambassador, De Beche, who was planning to leave in just a couple of weeks. We had to search all over for him. He turned out to have been at a shopping mall doing his Christmas shopping. That would show the exact date, I would say the 17th of December. He was to leave in two weeks. So the poor fellow was summoned in to the State Department and then Alexis Johnson, who was the Acting Secretary, read him the riot act and said that obviously Sweden did not value its relationship to the United States, judging from the intemperate remarks by Olaf Palme. Therefore, Johnson continued, the Ambassador who had already been named by the Swedish government, De Beche's successor, would not be welcome in Washington. Moreover, that our Chargé who by chance happened to have left on leave, John Guthrie, would not be going back to Sweden which would leave the mission in the hands of the third man, the political counselor who would act as Charge. So, for the next year and a half, my work was primarily devoted to damage control in Washington, trying to prevent the administration, which was the administration of President Nixon, from completely putting our relationship with Sweden down the drain. The word from the White House was that no one above an office director level could see the Swedes. So lots of people the Swedes had been calling on suddenly closed their doors to the Swedish mission. So Scott George and I were the ones who dealt exclusively with the Swedes, with the Chargé. His name was Leif Leifland, who later became Swedish ambassador to Great Britain. It reached absurd lengths during that year. Nixon, apparently, personally felt very strongly about this. Kissinger was his National Security Advisor, and William Rogers was the Secretary of State, and the word coming out of the White House was: "Be nasty to the bastards." So, Scott George and I drafted a paper, which proposed, and this was accepted, a "cool but correct" policy towards the Swedes, (reminiscent of our initial policy towards the Greek junta) and we would not disrupt any of our ongoing military relationships with the Swedes, but that no high level visitors could go to Sweden, that in Washington, no one higher than the Office Director would receive them, until such time as the Swedes showed that "they valued" their relationship with us.

So that's how we went throughout most of 1973. Now, things began to change for a couple of reasons by the fall of 1973. Kissinger became Secretary of State, but before that during his questioning by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a couple of Senators said: "Hey, what about relations with Sweden. This isn't good for us to be having this so-called 'cool but correct' relationship. We share a lot in common with Sweden, they're an important neutral, etc.." It was clear that the Swedes wanted a normalization of relations. Palme was uncharacteristically quiet during 1973. In addition, Kissinger met Liv Ullman, the Norwegian actress, but who played extensively in Ingmar Bergman films...

Q: Also, she was with the United Nations Children's Fund. So she was a major personality and an international figure, not just the movies.

OWENS: That's right. She met Kissinger at a dinner party in Los Angeles, or Hollywood, I guess it was, and came on very strongly for returning to normal relations with Sweden. But I think the pressure of Hubert Humphrey and Claiborne Pell who both had Swedish connections, Humphrey because of Minnesota, and Pell, I can't recall, but some family member came from Sweden, and he visited Sweden frequently. So, there was pressure on the Senate from the Democratic side, and the White House wanted to keep the Senators happy. We knew that eventually relations would be restored to normal.

Q: I think I heard a story to the effect that a Senator asked Kissinger at a hearing: "Why won't you see the Swedish Ambassador?" and he responded, sort of off the cuff: "Well, I'll see anybody. Of course, my door is open to anybody." And all of a sudden, relations had changed because he had committed himself.

OWENS: Well, he did. He assured the Senators in the hearing that he would look seriously into this question. I can't recall the specific statement you alluded to, but that would be along the lines that relations would be getting back to normal. As I mentioned, it reached ridiculous lengths. In 1973, the US held a competition for high school students throughout the world, to write "What the landing on the moon meant to me." Some students, one or two, I can't recall, from Sweden were among the winners, and the winners were to receive a piece of moon rock, which the astronauts had brought back from the moon. So, we sent a paper over on that, that the Swedes would also be receiving this, and we would send it to the high school in Sweden. The answer came back: "No, no moon rock for the Swedes," which was incredible how small the thinking was. These were the cronies...

Q: Ehrlichman, and the Nixon administration...

OWENS: But once Kissinger got on the bandwagon, and particularly once he became Secretary of State, it was inevitable that we would get back to normal relations. I do remember that when Hubert De Beche, the former Swedish Ambassador left, that Scott George and I were the only ones who went out to the airport to see him off. There was no one there from even Protocol. And during a cold winter day, he departed. Then by the spring of 1974, when we did agree to exchange ambassadors, Wilhelm Wachtmeister was made Ambassador to Washington, and again Scott George and I went out there to meet him. I often thought, in later years, Wachtmeister became quite a social person in Washington. He eventually became dean of the corps, playing tennis with Bush and others. I still think of Scott George and myself, and then Wachtmeister invited my wife and me over the next day for lunch, then to see him twelve years later, the lion at social functions, because he stayed on then from 1974 until two years ago. He became dean of the corps. So then, after service on the desk, I went to Sweden as Political Counselor with Strausz-Hupé.

Q: I want to go back to the time you were on the Swedish/Finnish desk. You mentioned the military relationship with Sweden. The Swedes were vehemently neutral, and yet at the same time they were basically plugged in to NATO.

OWENS: That's right.

Q: Were you getting screams of anguish from either the CIA or the Pentagon? How were you dealing with this?

OWENS: Well, they were pretty well intimidated by the political heat from the White House, and they took a low profile. However, the military was able to continue. We did discourage high level military visits. They were also included in the ban, but the existing military commitments not otherwise spelled out were to go on. Now, as far as the Swedish military were concerned,

they were very pro-US. They knew they were never afraid of ever having to defend against the United States. They knew who their potential adversary would be. It would be the Soviet Union. So, they depended upon us for research in their own weapons industry, particularly the aircraft industry. They had their own plane, the Viggen. Even though they depended in part on engine technology, Pratt Whitney and General Electric from the United States, they nevertheless competed with us for the sale, the major sales of the '70s, the weapons sales of the century was to sell to various countries, the fighter aircraft...

Q: *The F16?*

OWENS: The F16 which won, which beat a couple of American competitors out, as well as the Viggen, and the French plane.

In answer to your question, the CIA was of course active there. When I did eventually go to Sweden as Political Counselor, in a very large political section, a couple were State Department, and the rest were agency people whom I basically had very little dealings with.

WARD THOMPSON
Finnish Language Training
Washington, DC (1975)

Political/Labor Officer
Helsinki (1975-1980)

Ward Thompson attended Brown University before serving in the Marine Corps and attending Tufts-Fletcher School. He joined the Foreign Service in 1966. Thompson's career included posts in Denmark, Korea, Finland, Washington, DC, and Sweden. Thompson was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2000.

Q: *Well, now at the end of your tour in Korea in '75, mid-'75, you were assigned to Finnish language training, which I gather you'd wanted after what you said before.*

THOMPSON: Yes.

Q: *How long was that training?*

THOMPSON: That, again, was 44 weeks.

Q: *That was an effective course, too?*

THOMPSON: Yes. That was something that I had been hoping for, and I had bid on jobs in Scandinavia, and it was very hard to get the assignment, and as it turned out I don't think there was any competition. The inspectors came out to post in early '75 and I told them my situation, and I think they went back and did something about it because on April 25, I got my assignment

for transfer in July. And then I found out, when I came back, that the only job available in Helsinki was the labor-political job. And this was controlled by the labor force. And my predecessor, who now in retirement works full-time in the Labor Office in Washington, was a very good labor officer, and to be a good labor officer in Finland in the '70's, you had to deal with Communist unions. You had to deal with social democratic unions which had Communists on their boards. And there were some right-wingers back in Washington in the AFL-CIO and the Department of State who thought that this guy didn't really understand the real world, and so they were very reluctant to send a young person like me out there. Then of course they had the problem that there was an FSO position and you did have to learn the language. Now that's why it took so long to get that assignment. They had been reluctant. They just thought that I would somehow give the United States of America to the Communists. Anyway, I did get the assignment. I did enjoy the language training. My wife and I had adopted a couple of kids in Korea, so she couldn't do the training with me as she had taken Korean. I was with several other officers, including my coming boss, who was Ford Cooper, and his wife, Magda. There was an Agency officer. There was a USIA officer, whose position was cut about three months into the program, so he was pulled.

I mentioned Ford Cooper and his wife because Ford has just published a book in Finnish in which he mentions the language-training.

Q: It's in Finnish? Not translated?

THOMPSON: It's published in Finland, in Finnish. I've just done a little blurb for the *Foreign Service Journal*, which will not allow a review, because it's not in English. But it's a good example of how an FSO can do two things. First of all, it's a part of the ongoing dialogue with the Finns, and this is relevant to my experience there, of not really revisionist history but how and why things were done during the Cold War, what the American embassy's role was then. And secondly, it's an interesting twist on oral history, because what Ford did was go to Finland, two years ago, and interview a couple of dozen of the key players from the '70's. Many of them were in important positions. One of them, for example, is the prime minister. He went and he saw them all across the board. He tracked down the head of the Communist party at a terminal care facility somewhere and talked to others, and then, of course, he had access to his own reporting which has been declassified, and just his general recollections. It's a pretty good book, and he's looking for an English language publisher.

Q: It will eventually be translated, will it?

THOMPSON: Yes. Translation's no problem, because he wrote it in English first. He would like to use more of the interviews. The publisher didn't see the sense because everybody in Finland is writing memoirs these days. But the foreword is very relevant. He later went back as DCM. But in our time together he was political counselor and I was the labor-political officer. We were the only two Americans in the Political section, and then when he left, I replaced him as political counselor.

And we went in. It was an interesting time because, as you know, Vietnam had ended in 1975. That same year the Helsinki Conference took place, the Conference on Security and Cooperation

in Europe. Now we got there in '76, but we had that basis, that this long ghost of Vietnam, which had plagued us in Copenhagen and Stockholm and many other capitals, that was gone. And then the Finns, who had been in a very tenuous position in the Cold War, with their special relationship with the Soviets, had finally had a little room to maneuver because of the Helsinki Conference, not least because they were the hosts, but also because of the results of the conference. So this was a great time to go, especially as political officers. As usual, a small country like Finland did not get day-to-day attention from Washington. But there were a lot of things that we could do there.

Q: *Yes.*

THOMPSON: The Finns had some room to maneuver. We tried to get them to maneuver a little closer to shared positions with us, which was difficult. It was awkward for them. But we were always trying to keep them honest. We were trying to outmaneuver the Soviets, a very large presence there. There was one minority party. So basically, there were 200 members of parliament, I would say that we were on a return-your-phone-call basis with 190 of them at least.

Q: *That's amazing, you know, in a country that size with that size parliament. Digressing a bit, were you surprised when Finland eventually joined the European Union, after their long years of in-between?*

THOMPSON: No, and of course this gets into an area that I do lecture on today. What Finland did and said in the Cold War period was not necessarily what Finland wanted to do or say or what Finland believed. And a running challenge is that to straighten out in retrospect exactly what was Finland, and there is an ongoing debate, as I say. Keep in mind that there were five million people there. It's large geographically. And you look at their achievements in terms of political flexibility of being active in all of the NATO activities except for actually joining NATO, marketing Nokia telephones, other products which are not well known but are Finnish. I'd say the *per capita* achievement in this country is as good as any other country in the world. And who knows where it's going to lead, because they couldn't really assert themselves until 1990, and they joined the EU, and they had to make the decision because the Swedes decided to join. The Finns couldn't be isolated.

Q: *This is Thomas Dunnigan, and I'm speaking on February 15, 1999. I'm renewing my interview with Ward Thompson about his more than 25 years in the Foreign Service. Ward, when last we talked we were discussing the period when you were in Helsinki as labor officer and then as political counselor.*

THOMPSON: Yes.

Q: *We discussed the Communist influence in the government, which you said was fairly evident in those days. Was there much Soviet influence. Did the Soviet embassy take a prominent role in trying to manipulate the government?*

THOMPSON: Yes, I think everybody considered that the Soviet embassy was very important. In some respects the Soviets were regarded as proconsuls. I'm not sure we could ever figure out the

relationship between a resident of the KGB or the Soviet ambassador—it didn't really matter. The proximity of Finland to the Soviet border, of course, meant that modalities of communication were less important than the fact that the Soviets always had access to Finns and the relationship between the two was always a very careful dance. Now there's been a lot of revisionist history since the archives have opened and especially since Finland is no longer constrained by a relationship with the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union, of course, having fallen by the wayside, Finland is technically the only survivor of the successor countries of the Russian empire. Yes, of course, books have been written about this relationship. From the Soviets point of view, we always wondered where the policy was made, and I think, with the benefit of hindsight, we now conclude that there were probably only a few Soviets who had the time and the inclination to worry about Finland, and once in a while one of the top leaders like Ustinov, would concern himself, and this was not necessarily good for either of those two countries. But basically, you had really good experts in Finland, and of course one of the arguments now is whether their experts were better than our experts. As one of our experts, I yield to no one, but they had a number of language officers, a far greater number of Finnish language officers than we did. They always had an ambassador who was very well plugged in, often a Karelian or somebody with other geographic ties to Finland, and they had the benefit of this open access. I think the Finns would always return their phone calls. Nonetheless, from the Finnish point of view, I think the Soviets were less dominant than they would like to have been. The Finns were very careful. It was almost an industry to try to manage their relationship with their "eastern neighbor," as they would usually refer to the Soviet Union. So we found ourselves in a competition, quite often, where the ground rules were fair. A couple of examples. Our military attaché, of course, would like to travel, as they do in all countries, and quite often the Finns would tell him that certain installations were off-limits. And then they would tell him that the reason they were off limits is they didn't want the Soviets to plead for equal time. By telling the Americans they couldn't go, then they'd have a place to stand on with the Soviets.

In terms of policy, of course, the Soviet-Finnish relationship was at its most focused, but I'm not sure that the country as a whole paid that much attention. There was a distinction between the Soviets as so-called friends of Finland and the Soviet Union as a player in an international relationship that affected Finland. In policy terms, quite often the Foreign Ministry was perhaps more cautious than other Finns that we dealt with in discussing the Soviets. For our part, we tried to be sure that Finland was the neutral that it wanted to be in practice, and this meant quite often keeping the Finns honest. In that aspect, if I could just jump ahead temporarily to 1980, when Rozanne Ridgway was ambassador, we had decided, after many years and a lot of observing the relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union, that the Finns perhaps were creating an impression that wasn't necessary, that they were too eager to accommodate Soviet wishes, even though none of us really knew what the Soviet wishes were. So Rozanne Ridgway got herself an invitation to speak to a major establishment group, and her talk has been detailed in a lot of published works. I won't go into it.

Q: Speaking English or-

THOMPSON: She spoke in English, and we have a very competent Foreign Service national at the embassy, somebody whom I hired and who's still there—I saw her in December when I went back. She was tasked with being the interpreter, and the problem is, of course, that she was gifted

in many respects but not an experienced interpreter. So the actual presentation of the speech was in English, but the Finns were given transcripts, so the actual presentation in Finnish was rather superfluous and it was probably good that it was.

Q: I didn't want to interrupt you on substance, but I was curious about that point.

THOMPSON: However, the Finnish text which was issued had been excruciatingly worked over by us in the embassy. Ambassador Ridgway and I worked on the substance, but she assigned two translations, which were worked out independently, one I believe by a USIS translator and another one by our Political Section people. And then we compared the two translations, and we melded them so that there was no ambiguity in the Finnish text.

Q: One agreed-on translation.

THOMPSON: And you understand, as in Danish, it's very difficult to get some of those concepts which are near and dear to us but which have arisen from jargon and given rise to jargon into the everyday language of Finnish. For example, the word *commitment*: America is always talking about honoring our commitments, and it's very difficult to translate that into any Nordic language and have it mean exactly what we mean. So we had to be very precise in giving the meaning, and a literal translation wasn't that good in that case. So we got this, and why was this important, and why was the word *commitment* one of five or six that were key to the presentation? Well, because we wanted to lay out for the Finnish audience exactly what America's goals and objectives were in Europe, and no words—obviously this was well known to any educated Finn—we wanted this to play against both the stated goals in a gesture to the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union's claims about what our goals and objectives were. And this was all by way of background to making some friendly subtle suggestions to the Finnish audience as to how all of these played off against each other. And the basic message was—as I indicated—that we certainly appreciated and supported Finland's position in the world and Finland's efforts to manage its relationship in that very sensitive geographical part of the world. On the other hand, we thought that maybe Finland could better serve its own goals by looking at the context from the American as well as the Soviet perspective. The point was simple, and I think it was clearly made. The interesting thing is, you asked about the language. The text, as we had worked it out, was delivered in advance to President Kekkonen's office, not for him to censor it by any means, but as a courtesy. And the courtesy was because he would occasionally attend meetings of this group. So he had seen the speech. It was, in a sense, an *au revoir* talk because these were the sorts of things that we didn't normally raise in polite society.

Q: Had this been cleared with Washington?

THOMPSON: In general, yes. And it was nothing more than an iteration of our policy. You could read these things in what the USIA was putting out. It's just that this was going to be to a blue-ribbon audience. In fact, having seen the text, the president did arrive, and he sat in a place of honor, which is always a little bit in front of the crowd, and he listened attentively, and my recollection is that he applauded with the others and then he got up and shook her hand and said, "Thank you very much." He did not stay for the discussion, as he never would anyway. So that

was a very important signal. And that, again, I leapt ahead to that because I think it encapsulates our trilateral dance in Helsinki, as it were.

Q: Going back to that speech, did this group invite other ambassadors such as the Soviet ambassador?

THOMPSON: I believe that the practice was to invite the key members of the diplomatic community. I'm not totally certain of that, but anyway, the society is still going strong, they get important speakers.

Q: Still on the subject of Finland's relations with the Soviet Union, tell me about the social acceptance of the Soviets by the individual Finns.

THOMPSON: Well, I wanted to get back to what was essentially the mid-'70's when I first got there. I went ahead to discuss the formal policy relationship, and I indicated that it was a little bit different for the Finns. There again, there are probably two lines. One is what we would regard as the PR side of things, and the other is what the individual Finns were actually thinking. Our idea was hopefully to influence the thinking of the public person. What we had to work with was a society that was very small, of course, five million people, very homogeneous, perhaps the most homogeneous society in Western Europe at the time, and one with an unparalleled recent history of battling the Russians and Soviets. There was no mistaking the ordinary Finn's attitude toward the Russians. They were looked down upon. There was slang in the Finnish language with regard to the Russians. There were jokes told about the Russians. And of course, Finland was part of Russia up until the Russian Revolution. At the time of the revolution, Finland got its independence. Finland had been well treated. The Finns had been well treated under much of the Czarist rule in that they were enabled to break free of the Swedish language cultural elitist domination of the Finnish majority, so in that sense, Finland got all kinds of opportunities in its relationship with the Soviets, and indeed now much is made of the fact that Lenin agreed to let the Finns have their independence. Finland had its own civil war, which the Finnish patriots refer to as the Independence War, but there was a conflict between the Communists, and the non-Marxists on the other side, and it happened that the Whites eventually won against the Reds. The Finnish Whites did not participate in the Civil War in the Soviet Union, but the experience had left a cleavage in Finnish society, but then in 1939 the Soviets attacked Finland in the Winter War. Then after suing for peace Finland found itself in the continuation war, which was World War II, as a party with the Germans against the Russians. The outcome of both of those wars, in the second case permanently, was that Finland lost about 10 per cent of its territory. The people of Karelia were resettled in the rest of Finland in a very professional and methodical way.

Q: The Finns welcomed them in.

THOMPSON: Well, they had to. And Finnish landowners had to give up part of their lands so that these agrarian Karelians could come in and settle.

Q: By the way, I've forgotten. Did Finland declare war on the United States in the Second World War.

THOMPSON: No, and neither did the United States declare war on Finland. We broke diplomatic relations. And the British declared war on Finland so that they could be at the table in the peace settlement, which might have helped a little bit, but still it was a peace between Finland and the Soviet Union, and the Soviets had their demands on the Finns, which are all documented and which shaped Finland, that is recorded. And it was this treaty relationship and the experience that every little hamlet and town had lost boys in the war, and that circumstance, even though there was a very strong Communist Party and a strong element of the Social Democratic Party that was pro-Communist in many respects, individual Finns had no allegiance to Moscow. And this always colored the attitude of the leftist parties, except for the extreme Trotskyite faction. But basically there was no love for the Soviet Union in Finland, and this was manifested in many, many ways. For example, there were Soviet-Finnish friendship societies in every community in Finland, and quite often, we know, the local Conservative businesspeople and other members of the Conservative Party were encouraged to be the chairs of these associations so that they could keep them under control. The Finnish military had conscription, universal military conscription for all males within the confines of the treaty with the Soviet Union, which restricted this military to a very small number, fewer than 50,000 under arms. The Finns were able to juggle these figures so that every male would come in for six or seven months and then stay in the reserves. This was good for the mobilization concept, but it also provided a sort of leavening of society, just as any military does. But it was said that the Finns were very careful not to allow any Communists into the officer corps. And they'd had experience with a possible coup in 1948, which might have been along the Czechoslovak model. One really never knows because certain key Finns, including the key Communists in the cabinet, didn't take the action that had been taken in Prague.

So the Finns took the situation as it was. They had to accept it, but they worked within it very effectively, and it was only, I think, because of this long period under Kekkonen, when there was no reinvigoration of the ruling elite, that our concerns culminated in this speech that Ambassador Ridgway gave.

I think, although we didn't call it public diplomacy in those days, quite a lot of the embassy's activities in a country like Finland, where policy positions were pretty much predictable, because of the Cold War situation, we were trying to influence the Finns so that they would influence their lawmakers and policymakers, and there were limits as to what we could hope for. But we had two important breaks in 1975. First of all, the Vietnam War ended, and Vietnam had been the major thorn in our public diplomacy attempts.

Q: Throughout Scandinavia.

THOMPSON: Yes, indeed. And particularly in Finland because of this delicate neutrality that they aspired to. The other thing that happened was the Helsinki Conference. And although this occurred before I arrived in Finland, it changed the complexion of relationships that the Finns were involved in because it gave a certain legitimacy to Finnish neutrality and also to the foreign policy that Finland was following and would follow. So in this context, we were often sometimes in a light vein and sometimes not. We were jostling with the Soviets for public affairs points. For example, there's a race every year called the Finlandia Race. It's a ski race of 80 kilometers. And from time to time we've had embassy officials ski in it. And at one time the Soviet ambassador

told the press that he was going to participate, and he didn't, of course, so he lost a lot of points there because the press had picked that up. And then later when the media focused on Americans who had actually skied and completed the race, that looked good for us. I mentioned these Finnish-Soviet friendship societies. There were corresponding societies that leaned more toward us, and there was one town in Finland where one of the several sports clubs in town got the idea that it would be good to have the Americans come and have a ski competition, and so for two years we went to this town, which was Kolbola.

Q: *So you were a skier there, eh?*

THOMPSON: Yes, cross-country skiing. And the Finns had rigged it because they knew they were better than Americans. They had done something called precision skiing, where you ski a course which is five kilometers, and you time yourself, at any pace you want to set. And then you turn in your watches, and you go back to the starting line, and you tell the person in charge exactly how many minutes and how many seconds you're going to take to complete that five-kilometer course. And then the scores are kept according to how close each person finishes to their predicted score. Which actually enabled us to win one year because it didn't matter how fast we were; it was just how well we could judge.

Q: *How accurate, yes.*

THOMPSON: Yes. And then there was publicity in the local newspaper. Something different other than the ambassador coming and having coffee with the mayor. He had a bunch of Americans in ski outfits standing in this picture with the mayor. This was a sort of competition that was carried out on the lighter side. On the more serious side, the first ambassador that I worked for in Helsinki was Mark Evans Austad, who had been known in American radio circles as Mark Evans and was a rather well-known broadcaster. He was sent as ambassador, a political appointee, by Gerald Ford. He had handled Ford's inaugural ball and therefore was rewarded. Austad had been in Norway as a Mormon missionary, and he knew Scandinavia pretty well. He arrived in Finland at a very good time for somebody who was a professional public relations person because of the two things I mentioned, the end of the Vietnam War and the Helsinki Conference. It was a time when Finns were taking stock of their relationships. And the electronic media were largely influenced by leftists. This was not necessarily a bad thing for the country, but he thought it was a bad thing for the American image.

Q: *Very common in Europe.*

THOMPSON: Yes. Austad somehow got into a conversation with a representative of this leftist establishment in the commercial television. There were two channels, one commercial and one national. Anyway, the outcome was that a contest was arranged. Austad would go on national television, on this commercial channel, and debate with the representative of the media. And this, again, happened before I arrived, just before I arrived, and I think that the embassy had some trepidation about this. I'm sure that USIS did. But Austad was fond of saying that he understood that the embassy officers wouldn't support him on certain initiatives and that we had to worry about our jobs, but he didn't care about his job, so he was going to go ahead and do it anyway. As it turned out, this was a very good initiative on his part. He won the debate. He just

apparently skated circles around the representative of the Finns, and the debate was very well received by the Finnish public. In fact, years later you would still have people come up to you and say, "I remember Mark Austad, and such a good job he did on television." This was something that the Russians just couldn't match us on. They didn't have the latitude, and they didn't have the aptitude. So these were some of the examples of how we were engaged in this triple dance with the Soviets and the Finns.

Q: May I refer back to some of your comments about the military? I notice that in 1977 General George Brown of our joint chiefs came to Helsinki, I believe the highest ranking American military man who visited there. Did that cause any waves or not, this neutrality policy?

THOMPSON: I don't believe it caused any serious waves. I don't remember precisely very much about that visit. I do remember at the time that that was of concern. We were always trying to push for visits like that. I think it had to be taken in the overall context of what was happening. You recall that at the same time the Finns were pushing a Nordic nuclear weapons free zone for all of the Nordic countries. They were very unhappy that the Norwegians were allowing German troops for the first time to engage in exercises on Norwegian soil. So in that context, it was disturbing to the Finns, I think, that we would want to have such a visitor at that time. On the other hand, despite what I've said about public appearances, the Finns, I think, were always hoping that we would take these initiatives, from Brown's visit to Ridgway's talk. They were pulling for us, but they couldn't encourage us, and quite often they would have to tell us that this was going to cause problems.

Q: I'm sure the Soviets would match general Brown's visit with one of their own-

THOMPSON: Well, of course, we would never be able to compete, and in fact cannot compete today with Moscow in terms of visits, because it's so close by. Of course, underlying any concerns was the fact that according to the friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance pact that the Finns had to sign with the Soviets, again in the Czech context, 1948, was a clause calling for consultations if it appeared that there was a danger that Germany or any countries allied with Germany, which included most of us, were threatening the Soviet Union via Finland. And the Soviets never really invoked this clause. They threatened to a couple of times, but that was always a legal basis for concern because they could have invoked the clause.

Q: The Finns always knew it was there.

THOMPSON: Oh, yes, and the Soviets could always remind them it was there.

Q: Did the Finnish military undertake joint maneuvers with the Soviet military? Were they that close, or-

THOMPSON: No. There were visits. And of course, one has to keep in mind that the Finns were buying hardware from a variety of sources, including MIG aircraft, just as you cannot have American aircraft without an American military presence, you can't have a Soviet aircraft without a Soviet technical military presence. The Soviets loved to send delegations, both military and civilian, so there were always delegations trooping through Finland.

Q: President Kekkonen made a visit to East Germany, a state visit, in '77. Did we try to persuade him not to go, because we certainly were not trying to upgrade the East Germans in any way?

THOMPSON: I believe that Finland was the country that scuttled the Holstein Doctrine, and the Finns, as in many of the things they did, they had their reasons for doing it, and there wasn't much that we could do at that point to discourage them. We were always laying out for them what we saw as the logical approach to foreign affairs.

Q: On the political front, there were elections in '79 in which the Conservatives made some serious gains. Why was this, because Finland had been very much under the, let's say, left-of-center influence for a number of years?

THOMPSON: Well, I think the fate of the Conservative Party of Finland is something which has to be analyzed outside of the normal context of political parties. The Conservatives had been in the government. They left the government when Kekkonen was president, and frankly, he wouldn't let them back into the government. And occasionally the reason cited by him and others was that the Conservatives had not kept up their credentials with the Soviets. But we felt, and I think history bears out the conclusion, that the Soviets probably were not vetoing the Conservatives being in the Finnish Government, but as a result of being frozen out, the party started garnering a lot of support.

Q: As the opposition.

THOMPSON: —as an opposition party, and ultimately it had to come back into the government, and of course it did so while the Soviets were in power, and it didn't cause any problems.

Q: Now in 1980, you had a visit from Vice-President Mondale. Were you still there then?

THOMPSON: Yes, I was.

Q: How did that work out? Was he successful?

THOMPSON: It worked out very well. The Finns were very glad, as any Nordic is, to get either a presidential or a vice-presidential visit from the United States. And I would say that regardless of what the political and intentional situation would be at the time, that they would always welcome such a visit. Now, again, I have to mention some context here. In 1977, Finland celebrated its 60th anniversary of independence, and it had a very big celebration. It invited leaders of other countries to come, primarily the leaders of the other Nordics and the other neighbor, which was the Soviet Union. And it was Kosygin at the time, who came to represent the Soviet Union. And we inquired, and I think we were told, that an American delegation would be welcome, that countries were primarily going to be represented by their ambassadors or whatever, and we decided, back in '77, that we would try to get somebody important to head the American delegation. Well, interestingly, the person chosen by Washington was Mrs. Mondale, Joan Mondale, and there was some discussion because she had no official position within the government, but obviously if she was appointed to head a delegation she had an official

recognition. There was this discussion on the part of the Finns and the Americans, too, frankly. But this turned out to be a fantastic public relations success. For one thing, since she wasn't in the chain of command, you couldn't compare our apples with their oranges. You had Kosygin, you had the head of the royal houses of the Scandinavian countries, you had Joan Mondale. You had a few other delegations headed by people from their capitals. She was accompanied by another woman, and our ambassador was a woman, Rozanne Ridgway, by that point. So you had three women heading up the American delegation. You had these gray suits on the Soviet side and the stuffy royalty on the Nordics'; and President Kekkonen was really taken with Joan Mondale, which earlier, by the way, on his visit to the United States, he'd been really taken with Shirley Temple Black, or I think with the idea of Shirley Temple, as chief of protocol, escorting him around.

Q: *Aha! A good eye.*

THOMPSON: We had another issue in 1977, in that we didn't have any money for important expensive gifts to countries who were celebrating their 50th anniversary of independence. And the Soviets came, you know, with some crystal vase or something, and the others brought important things. Mrs. Mondale arrived with a box of Christmas decorations which had been handmade by American Indian school children. I don't really remember it, but it had a monetary value of very, very little; and again, just as she was unique among the delegates, our gift was unique and was something that the president said, in English, "Oh, let's look." And so here he was taking these things out and looking them over, and I think also because of her gender, Mrs. Mondale was placed next to the president at the state banquet, and Kosygin was across as the guest of honor. And I still recall this newspaper picture of the head table, and Kosygin is bending down to get his napkin—very undignified—and the president is enjoying eye contact with Mrs. Mondale. So I say that because in 1980, you couldn't take Vice President Mondale's visit out of that contact. The Mondales are very fondly remembered in Finland, so he was not just the American Vice President, but also-

Q: *Joan Mondale's husband.*

THOMPSON: Yes, exactly.

Q: *All right, you mentioned a moment ago the Nordics' sending their royalty. Could you comment on Finland's relations with the other Nordics, principally with Sweden, but how did they fit in the picture, and did they regard themselves in the same category?*

THOMPSON: Yes. First of all, the Finns were very anxious to be regarded as Nordics, because this helped them establish their Western credentials, so in terms of international politics, the Nordic connection was very important. The relationship with Sweden was not as strong as a love-hate relationship, but it was an ambiguous relationship because Sweden had been the dominant power. The Swedish culture was important as a Western culture, but it was also in some competition with the home-grown culture, and there were vestiges of this that still were quite strong. And then in terms of what the Nordics refer to as the "Nordic balance," where you had three NATO countries and two neutrals, just as the NATO countries varied in their degree of commitment to NATO, you had two degrees of neutrality. The Swedes were the purer neutrals

with the long-established history of neutrality, and the Finns were the aspiring neutrals, so it was very important to the Finns that the Swedes be as neutral as possible because otherwise they'd give a bad name to neutrality. Sweden, for this particular time, was of course the wealthy big brother, and that didn't necessarily sit well with the Finns, but there wasn't much they could do about it. Sweden is a larger country, a wealthier country, long established in the world in those very areas where Finns sought some room for maneuver, such as UN peacekeeping, social welfare, and so forth. The Swedes were ahead on every count. Lately, I think, the Finns have used this to energize their own efforts. As soon as Sweden applied to join the European Union, the Finns put in their application and became much more committed and enthusiastic defenders of the EU today. The end of the Cold War and those constraints let the Finns assert themselves so that recently within the EU there's been an initiative called the "Nordic Dimension," and this is something the Finns have pushed. They want the EU to focus on its northern areas, its relationship with Russia, the Arctic, the environment, and so forth—which is good, and it's logical. It bothers the Swedes because the Finns went ahead without consulting with the other Nordics, particularly Sweden and Denmark, who were also in the EU. This is the flip of the coin from the relationship in the '60's and '70's and '80's.

Q: All right, you mentioned Europe there, and during this period, of course, Europe was coalescing. Was there a pull toward Europe from the Finnish side? Were the Finns attracted by this, or not, or did they feel that they had to maintain their neutrality and that this wasn't for them?

THOMPSON: Yes, the Finns were always reluctant up until the end of the Soviet Union, until 1990, and very cautious about participating in European organizations. For a while the Soviets would not let Finland join the United Nations, and then when Finland joined the United Nations, it was also able to become a participant in the Nordic Council, in the EFTA, but again, with some restrictions, some self-imposed, some imposed by the organization. They were never full-fledged in their participation in the European organizations. They were late to join the Council of Europe for that same reason. And they just ruled out any possibility of joining the Common Market or the EC. At the same time, the Finns were balancing procurement so that they would have, for example, from . . . they got some Hawker-Sidley aircraft from the British. They had Drakens from Sweden. And similarly their tanks and their guns and so forth were procured in different countries, and there was a certain balance between East and West. And the Finns have acknowledged this now, in the '90's, when they have purchased the FA-18 from the United States, which is their main aircraft and makes them a dominant air power in the north. But every little area of technical cooperation, military purchase, whatever, I think was carefully weighed on the part of the Finns, and they wanted to develop their ties to Europe, but not in an institutional sense that would alarm the Soviets, of course.

Q: Finally, my last question relates to your position as political counselor. How were your relations with the Agency there, the Central Intelligence Agency? Were they close? They must have had a fairly large station?

THOMPSON: Yes, they were integrated to an extent in that they belonged to the Political Section. I think we had defined our relations on a domestic side. In many ways, they had the better reasons to deal, not with the Communists but with the questions of the Communist Party

and so forth. I mentioned the other day that we had very good personal ties with virtually all 200 members of the Finnish parliament. I mean, that's the way that the embassy approached its tasks. I think the Political Section focused more on the Social Democrats and the parties to the right of that party. If you go back in history, I understand that even the Social Democrats were very wary of dealing with the declared diplomatic-list officers of the American embassy, but basically, we regarded what the station did as related to the international arena, watching the Soviets and so forth. If there was anything that was purely domestic, then the ambassador wanted us to continue to deal with them. And yet I think because of the assertive, outgoing approach of the embassy economic and political officers and the military attachés that we covered Finland pretty well, and very little on the domestic side was left to the CIA

The Agency chief would occasionally have contacts with leading Finns, and I think it was to the Finns' credit and to our credit that everybody saw this in the context of the relations with the Soviets and how so often the Soviet resident would be entertaining Finns at the highest levels at the Soviet embassy, and so I think the Finns would seek out the American counterparts just so that they would keep this balance.

The area of domestic politics that was of greatest concern to all agencies of the U.S. Government was of course the leftist side of the domestic escutcheon, and since I had been there as labor attaché, I was the embassy person, as were my predecessors, who had the greatest entrée to labor unions, the labor central federations (of which there were four), and the labor parties, the Social Democrats and to some extent the Communist Party. I was very fortunate to have Finnish language training before I went to Finland, and my Finnish was quite fluent. I had some contacts based on my earlier time as an exchange student. One of these turned out to be head of a labor union, and he was talking to me once, and I said, you know, "I like visiting local chapters," or whatever. He arranged for me to go on a tour with two of his officials, and they were visiting local chapters all throughout Finland, and I went along for several days. Now the interesting thing was that perhaps in countries where there are no formal relations, even among our friends, this wouldn't have been possible, but the Finns always took you at face value, and there was one man and one woman and I, and we traveled north in Finland. We visited local chapters in such places as one of the iron mines down underground in Lapland. We visited the factory that makes the Finnish knives—the Martini factory. We visited other industrial sites, and everywhere, you know, the meetings were held with the workers and with their union people, everything in Finnish and everybody understood that I was an American diplomat, and nobody raised any questions. And it was really good, and then there was the socializing afterwards, of course, because you'd have a meeting with coffee and so forth, but then in the evening there'd be dinners or saunas or whatever.

Q: And plenty of vodka and other things.

THOMPSON: And this wasn't a unique experience. I was doing this sort of thing throughout my time in Finland. And other embassy officers were too. I remember once when one of the party leaders, this time from the Center Party, called me up when I was political counselor and asked if we had any Finnish speaker who liked to ski. And I said, Oh, yes, and he invited us to a facility—and every organization has facilities there, summer places or winter places, depending on the season. I took along Mike Coverley, who's presently DCM in Helsinki, who was a junior

economic officer, and two other officers, and we went off to this lodge, which was run by the . . . I think it's the . . . well, underlying it, I think, is the tuberculosis association, but it's the organization which maintains the lottery machines throughout Finland. You put money in the machine and contribute to charity that way. And this itself is a big bureaucracy, and they have their own lodge. And we went out, and we spent the day, and we skied across the sea and had a sauna and so forth, and this person was also head of . . . Well, he was an official of that group, but he was also secretary of the Center Party. And this was just an example of the access and entrée, so that I could draw on this experience, and it wasn't just personal. It was the way the embassy operated. And so our relationships, I think, in State and Commerce and other sides of the embassy were pretty well developed.

Q: There are few countries in which you can get as close to the situation as you must have been in Finland.

THOMPSON: Well, I agree, because I did serve in Sweden and Denmark, and I got spoiled in Finland, for example, in attending party congresses. Now then, because of the Soviet-American competition, the Finnish parties, except for the Communist Parties, were very anxious to have diplomats attend their party congresses. And this wasn't something they did because they had to do it to be polite. They would actively invite us and hope that we would go. And I attended congresses of the Social Democrats and the Center Party and the Conservative Party. I went to one party congress in Oulu, which is quite far north in Finland—this was the Center Party—this was the congress at which the long-time head of the party, Johannes Vilallainen, who had been prime minister and foreign minister, was defeated by Paavo Vayrynen, who became foreign minister and for a long time was the presidential aspirant of the Center Party. So there was a lot of interest. There were a lot of diplomats who attended as well as media. And I went to the hotel, and the party was taking care of our rooms and everything, and I went to the hotel, and they assigned me my room and told me that I was rooming with the third secretary of the embassy of the German Democratic Republic.

Q: Ho! A diplomatic imbroglio immediately.

THOMPSON: Well, I was a little nervous, but this was a very nice guy, and he was out most of the time, and he showed me pictures of his young child and his wife. He was fine, and of course, he probably is still a diplomat for Germany, as far as I know.

ROZANNE L. RIDGWAY
Ambassador
Finland (1977-1980)

Ambassador Rozanne L. Ridgway was born in Minnesota on August 22, 1935. She received a bachelor's degree from Hamline College in 1957 and entered the Foreign Service in the same year. Ambassador Ridgway's career included positions in The Philippines, Norway, The Bahamas, Finland, and Germany. This interview was conducted by Ann Miller Morin in 1987.

RIDGWAY: I was eventually offered the embassy to Trinidad-Tobago, and I accepted it and I, that evening, I went out again to visit my friends the Masons, who were then living in the District. We got to talking about it and drinking Gallo Hearty Burgundy and I got mad, and I said, "Wait a minute. I've done nothing but islands." The Philippines, Palermo, Nassau, and I knew where the other women had gone and I said, "You know, I don't want to do hyphenated islands. I'm better than hyphenated islands." Which you always are when you're drinking Gallo Hearty Burgundy. So Nancy Mason and I got out her atlas. I went through the atlas and came to Finland, and so I marched in the next day and said I didn't want to go to Trinidad-Tobago, I wanted to go to Finland. Patsy Mink was annoyed with me at that time at any case, and we were keeping it civilized, but it was not a good relationship.

I was named for Finland but then I finished up the negotiations in Cuba. I flew to Havana as part of the effort both to get the agreement signed on the maritime boundary and on fisheries, and then to explore whether there might be some basis on which to open a dialogue with Cuba. That didn't work. I went down to Nicaragua to give another try at a new Pacific tuna regime, but only bought time. Canada had also then gone to 200 miles and we collided off of three major fishing areas. We collided off of George's bank in New England; we collided in Juan de Fuca in Seattle, and at the Dixon entrance. And we were going to need time. So I organized a very large delegation, some eighty people, and we, working with Len LeGault who's now the DCM at the Canadian Embassy, we sat down and hammered out a so-called interim agreement that organized fisheries in those three areas despite the legal dispute, pending the naming of eminent persons to tackle the long-term problem of solving those fisheries. And then I went off to Finland.

Q: You were working right up to the last minute?

RIDGWAY: Right up to the last minute. I really was. I was in Nicaragua in July and came back and sort of closed up my apartment and went off to Finland.

Q: Recapping just a tiny bit here. You told me the business of you being "only an FSO-3." Were you able then to be promoted?

RIDGWAY: Oh, yes, I was trying to think of how it went. No, from that point on, if you look at the record, I was promoted to FSO-3 in 1972, to O-2 in '76, to O1 in '78 and to Career Minister in '80 or '81. '80 I think, maybe '81.

Q: Okay.

RIDGWAY: I mean at that point it just flew.

Q: Yes, yes. Now we are at the point of your becoming ambassador. The department nominated you then?

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: And with the so-called blessings of Patsy Mink?

RIDGWAY: I think she was happy to see me go; that wasn't going to work.

Q: That was not going to work.

RIDGWAY: That wasn't going to work, and I was looking forward to another eighteen months of that same negotiating schedule, some of the problems repeating themselves, and it just did not interest me. I could tell I wasn't going to be able to sort of pull myself together for that same amount of energy that was required.

I was replaced by John Negroponte and that was one of the difficult periods because Morris Busby believed deeply that he should have replaced me. He had stood in for me all of the time that I was on the road and deserved an answer. We had some pretty teary evenings together, because we were close, and he was a wonderful colleague. But he had come into the department from the Navy. He had been combat officer and things of that sort on destroyers and was also in international law, and he came to the department as a Navy exchange officer, liked it, but he was an exchange on the ocean staff. He stayed in the ocean staff, became a Foreign Service Reserve Officer, and I didn't believe, even though he was very active and did so many things, I just didn't believe he was quite ready, and believed he needed a little more exposure. That hurt him deeply, and it hurt me having to do it. Over a period of time that has all come out just fine. He's just back in the department from a brilliant record in Mexico as the DCM. And I noticed he's, as promised, he will be the principal deputy assistant secretary in ARA..

So he has moved from these functional fringes, where you can be [stranded], [having been an {Naval} officer, he didn't start out in the Department], right to the heart of policy. I'm not convinced that would have happened if he had taken that other job. I think he would have ended up stuck in that area with no additional credentials. I could be wrong. But it's turned out well, and we have stayed friends throughout, but it was not an easy time.

Q: Well, you have described yourself, the way you have an accretion of knowledge and experience and how invaluable it was for you.

RIDGWAY: Yes, each little step along the way gave something.

Q: You would realize he needed that.

RIDGWAY: I thought he did. Now it was difficult when he confronted me with it, and said, "How could you do this to me? How could you trust me to act while you were gone, and not trust me to name me in your stead?" I had trouble explaining it, and so as I say, there were a lot of hours together, just the two of us sitting in this office trying to get the heart of what had troubled me. But we talked it out.

Q: Did Mink do anything to help you get this nomination, or did she just not stand in the way?

RIDGWAY: She just didn't stand in the way. Carol Laise [director general of Foreign Service]. was notified that I'd really like to go on and Bob Brewster knew the personnel business and they

just--as I say, they came back with Trinidad-Tobago, and it sounded good until I thought about it. I suppose at that stage of the game I was in my uppity phase. I was just a year and half from having told Larry Eagleburger I wouldn't go into a vacancy again. I was tired at this stage of being the little girl in the file room that steps in. I mean, we [women] are all raised to be, we take great pride in standing behind people. We take a great quiet pride in being the power behind the throne. I think that's total nonsense and very dangerous. I had to learn it the hard way. So I was sort of in that mood of "I don't want to do hyphenated islands," and then I got Finland.

Q: I've never heard them called that before.

RIDGWAY: I think that's what the women have tended to get. It became a joke later between me and Virginia Schafer. I don't know whether she told you about the time she and I sat with the same atlas and did. . .

Q: No, no.

RIDGWAY: . . . but she ended up, unfortunately, with Papua-New Guinea, but it's the same kind of thing.

Q: But that was her choice. She wanted to go there.

RIDGWAY: That was her choice.

Q: She doesn't have the background you have anyway, the overall experience.

RIDGWAY: And we were comfortable with that, we worked out that one, one weekend.

Q: She thoroughly enjoyed it and did a good job.

RIDGWAY: Yes she did, she did a good job.

Q: Well, that was fine. But it's interesting to me the way you stood up the department in each case and made your point.

RIDGWAY: Yes, but I wasn't stamping my foot.

Q: No, no, but you stood your ground.

RIDGWAY: In fact, in most cases, I really had to always go down the corridor and have a good cry in the ladies room and then pull myself together and come back and do things I wasn't comfortable doing. I was raised to be the quiet one, that you were what your work said you are. Well, that takes you so far and then you get pushed around.

Q: That's right, especially if you are a woman.

RIDGWAY: Uh huh.

Q: I think that is something we all know very well. So, anyway, we've gotten this far. Now, with your Senate hearing, do you remember any details of the Senate hearings?

RIDGWAY: Well, my Senate hearings have gone the same over all of the years. I sit down. The chairman says, "The nominee is "and Senator Pell, who is, you know, fond of the oceans world, asks if he can enter some remarks on the record, and endorses the application. I was asked one or two questions about Finnish neutrality, of Finland and the CSCE Conference, Finland and the Helsinki Final Act, Finland and the Soviet Union. No more than three or four questions and it was all over. Those were the easy days of nominations. They've gotten harder since then. There was no problem at all.

Q: Well, what about the other job you had as an ambassador here?

RIDGWAY: Actually I did my hearings also for that. I'm sorry, that was a confirmed rank.

Q: That was a confirmed rank. That's what I wanted to get clear. I thought it was.

RIDGWAY: That was not a personal rank. I went up for hearings on that, but there the industry had already been fighting the department to get the 'acting' away. The industry came to the department and said get that "acting" off. We do not want to be represented by an acting deputy assistant secretary, we want to be represented by a deputy and we want her to have the title. So, that was pulled out of the department by this industry. The industry had told Larry Eagleburger they preferred me to the other candidate. So, that went easily.

Q: So that was really your first. You have been confirmed many, many times haven't you? So that was pretty pro forma in your case. The next thing would be the swearing-in ceremony. Is this the first time you were actually sworn in, in the sense that ambassadors to bilateral countries are?

RIDGWAY: I'm trying to remember how that went. When I was sworn in as ambassador for oceans and fisheries, I made a big thing out of it.

Q: Oh, you did?

RIDGWAY: I did and my mother came, and I have a niece and nephew and brother, and they came, and we had lots and lots of people, and that was all very nice. For Finland, my mother came, and my brother, and it was somewhat smaller. They've gotten smaller and smaller as we've gone along. [laughter]

Q: As you go up in importance.

RIDGWAY: Well, something else sets in, we can get to at the time, because each was sort of situational.

Q: I see. At this time, my understanding is, that President Carter did not make the phone calls himself.

RIDGWAY: Oh, no, there was nothing, and I never met the president.

Q: You never met the president, nor had your picture taken, nor anything?

RIDGWAY: No, no.

Q: Don't you think it is helpful to be able to display that picture?

RIDGWAY: Absolutely, absolutely. In fact, when I put his picture out--and no one in Finland ever knew that I did not in my entire period of service ever meet the president--and I would have his picture out, which came to me just sort of printed with, "Best wishes to Rozanne Ridgway, Jimmy Carter," and someone would come in and say, "Well, I see you have a picture of the president. You no doubt have a great deal of contact with him." And I would say, tongue in cheek, but I would say, "Well, the last time I saw the president, he was quite reflective on such and such." Well, it was on television, but you know--[laughter] But I never said, "The last time he shook my hand," "The last time I saw him personally." I did the best I could. It was embarrassing and it left you without a rather important piece of diplomatic material. I made it up.

Q: You had to make it up.

RIDGWAY: Uh huh.

Q: He was a man who didn't understand ceremony did he, or the uses of ceremony?

RIDGWAY: He didn't understand the office of the president, the office. And none of his people did; it was a strange atmosphere. But it was the beginning of an administration and I've come to learn they always have a strange atmosphere. They have their own personalities, and I suppose it was no stranger than most. Certainly not as malicious as this [Reagan] administration when it came in, so I realize upon reflection it was just kind of different.

Q: But it is true that there is a great use in diplomacy for those little touches.

RIDGWAY: Yes, for those touches.

Q: All right. to prepare for this assignment what did you have to do well, you didn't have any time, did you?

RIDGWAY: No, I didn't really prepare for it. I got my apartment rented, I read in what I could read in. Made some of the appointments around town. Went up to Minnesota and bought a new wardrobe that I hadn't been able to do for a long time, and took off.

Q: You really didn't get the preparation or language training or anything like that. Did you stop over en route.?

RIDGWAY: I stopped over in the UK, not to spend any time there, but to change clothes.

Q: Oh, really?

RIDGWAY: I traveled in blue jeans, but took an outfit with me and in the changing of planes and the like, went into the public restroom and changed from blue jeans to a suit.

Q: An ambassadorial suit.

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: I'm sure you're the only [ambassador] who ever traveled in jeans. Now, can you recall anything about your first day?

RIDGWAY: I sure can. One of the reasons I changed, was that I had been told that there was a great deal of interest in Finland in my arrival. A woman ambassador, to be sure, was most of the reason, but an American ambassador as well. And I have really never even forgotten my arrival because I was flying British Airways, and when the plane pulled up, I now know the airport in Finland, but I didn't know quite where to look at the time. There was all this gaggle of people on the tarmac, but off to the side, what I now know as the VIP lounge.

And the plane pulled up and it was the kind of a plane that didn't pull up to a tunnel but had the ramp that came up to it. A little boy in first class looking out the window said to his father, "Oh, look at all of those people." By this time it was a straight Hollywood vignette of this rush of people following the stairs up to the side of the airplane. And his father looked out the window and said, "Oh, they must be for me." And I really was embarrassed for this fellow because we had been notified by USIS about this enormous interest in my arrival, would I have a statement and that kind of thing. But I didn't say anything and he got off the plane, and of course nothing happened.

And I got off the plane, and as I say, it was sort of a Jeanne Crain goes to Hollywood kind of movie you know, where everybody was running backwards taking their pictures, while they are walking backwards and following you and the lights and the TV cameras and the like. The next day the man who had said that, who was the new head of British Airways in Finland, sent a beautiful bouquet to the Embassy and said, "I didn't realize the welcome was for you and look forward to perhaps seeing you while we both serve in Finland" But the arrival was very much the way that my service during that two and half year period was. The interest never flagged. My own sense of a warm, and cordial reception never changed.

Q: Very nice.

RIDGWAY: And I went through what wasn't my first press conference because I had been doing them throughout the fisheries years. And to the residence with the household staff lined up outside the residence to greet me. And to go on inside where the staff was all assembled in sort of an uncomfortable and stiff manner standing around in this big living room. That was late in the afternoon, given the time difference, I think I got in around three o'clock. I had dinner and

wandered around in this lovely upstairs bedroom in a state of disbelief. That was the first day, that wonderful, wonderful change, but a dramatic change.

I don't know if any one along the way has tried to explain to you, at least among the career officers. I don't know the reactions of people coming in from outside, but there is no way in my view that I could have prepared for the difference between being a DCM or a senior officer here in the Department and being an ambassador. And I don't think you can describe to a younger generation of people what it is. You have got to go through it and you can almost feel the tearing of the cloth that separates you then from the rest of the people as you have moved on.

Q: Really?

RIDGWAY: Now, that could be personal, maybe nobody else went through it. But I sensed immediately that something was different, that my view was no longer up to a leadership, but was the leadership view. And it wasn't uncomfortable, I suppose indeed, I relished it, but I just knew instantly that something was different.

Q: You are on a different plane.

RIDGWAY: Completely different.

Q: There is a certain barrier, I think, between you and the others. That is something . . .

RIDGWAY: Well, there are two things, and I suppose if you are not careful you can get them mixed up. I happen to think that there is not only a separation between you and everyone else, and it is a separation which is important to maintain,--that's another lesson I can get to in a minute. I found that within myself that I was also consciously separating myself from the ambassador.

Q: Uh huh

RIDGWAY: And I almost became in my ambassadorial role, at least on ceremonial occasions, a third person.

Q: Standing aside, watching this thing happen?

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: Do you think it is more difficult for an American to move into that role, than it might be for somebody from . . .

RIDGWAY: No, no, because I've watched people move in as if they were born to it, and turn into total autocrats as if they [were owed] this privilege that had just been waiting for them to be discovered, to give it to them. I've discovered people who move into it very easily, don't become autocrats. It was just that I found as I moved into it that there was a difference. I was always aware of the difference between what I had been and what I had suddenly become.

Q: Well it's a very heady thing, and I have questions to ask you about afterwards. That's why this is very interesting. Is this the first time you've gone into this in such detail? Under the Carter regime, did you have to travel tourist class on the plane?

RIDGWAY: No, not at that point, no.

Q: They hadn't gone that way.

RIDGWAY: I flew first class.

Q: That saved one embarrassment Francis Cook had.

RIDGWAY: What was hers?

Q: She was in tourist class, and when the plane arrived everybody was waiting for her by the first class exit. She was on one of those French Comets, you know, the tourists went out the back. She had to wait until everybody left the plane so she could scuttle through first class! This is the sort of thing, I don't know how much money you save, but it isn't worth it.

RIDGWAY: It isn't worth it, no, even Jimmy and Tammy Fay Bakker are saying God wanted them to go first class. [laughter]

Q: Well, you were not the first woman ambassador in Finland, were you?

RIDGWAY: Yes, I was, the first American woman.

Q: The first American I'm sorry I'm mixing it up with Norway. I always do that.

RIDGWAY: No, Francis Willis and Margaret Tibbetts had both been there and Francis Willis had been the DCM in Finland.

Q: She'd been the DCM, that's it. Willis had been DCM. So this is a new thing for the Finns, to have

RIDGWAY: An American woman, but it also was also just as rare for them to have a career officer. I was the [third] career officer.

Q: Oh, really?

RIDGWAY: Third career officer, John Hickerson had been there in the '50s, Tyler Thompson had been there in the '60s and then I arrived in '77, and it was almost exclusively, if you look at the record, political. It's been a political post. They were delighted, not only with my being a woman, but, I would say, over the long run they switched the order. They were delighted to have a career officer.

Q: And they're pretty liberal as far as women goes?

RIDGWAY: Oh, yeah, that was a fascination, I don't mean that, I mean I was just besieged by requests, but I had an excellent information officer, a man named Dick Giblet, and we gave a couple of interviews to some women's magazines that had to do with arriving and the like, but we held off on substance until about October, and then I gave a major interview that laid out what I thought I was going to be doing.

And it was quite a provocative interview. I hadn't intended it to be, but it came across as provocative, and then after that, we, depending what we wanted to do, just picked and chose among constant requests. Lots and lots of magazines who were quite willing one month to show me in the kitchen and the next month to show me skiing and the next month to show me playing golf, if I were willing to give that many interviews, so we . . . depended upon the message we wanted to give.

Q: How did you feel about giving those kitchen interviews?

RIDGWAY: I never minded. I was happy to do it. Happy to do it. It was a part of diplomacy and people were interested.

Q: But they don't ask men about being in the kitchen.

RIDGWAY: They could if they wanted to

Q: They could but they don't.

RIDGWAY: Well, it depends on the men, look at Richard Perle on the front page of the Washingtonian magazine in his kitchen.

Q: Sure. That's true. More and more now. How soon did you present your credentials?

RIDGWAY: I think I arrived July 22nd and presented my credentials on the 5th of August, something like that.

Q: And this is customary?

RIDGWAY: It was about right, it wasn't too long a wait.

Q: Can you recall the ceremony involved.

RIDGWAY: I can, and certainly my first night that I was there, that first day was a sense of something that was different. But the way I articulate it now is mostly from the day I presented my credentials. And it's one of my most vivid career memories. I had a new dress, I thought I looked pretty good. The staff, we'd had an argument. The Foreign Office said three or four people could accompany me, and I said no, that I'd either be accompanied by two people, the DCM and the Defense attaché, or I would be accompanied by five, which would mean the

political counselor, the administrative and economic officers as well as the other two about six. They said it couldn't be done, and I said, "You must understand I'm the head of a mission, and all of its parts are equal. Either they all come, or I will go down to the traditional two."

Q: Oh, dear.

RIDGWAY: And I said, "Ford [Ford Cooper, political counselor], I must explain to you that my view of a mission is that either all of the counselors go, including the heads of section who do not have counselor rank or none, and it will be the DCM and the Defense attaché." Well, he thought I was wrong, and I said, "I'm sure you do, but this is how I want to run things." The DCM, at the time I was changing DCMs, Sam Fry hadn't arrived, and he made the point. But my view of that was that there were a lot of things wrong with the mission, and one was that, that was the attitude that had prevailed. Because the USIS officer also was to be included. The Foreign Office said, "Fine."

And I tell the story [on Ford] now, only because we have been colleagues ever since, and I've been a great booster of his career. So the day arrived, and I was sort of in my best black bib and tucker, I was to have worn a suit but my luggage hadn't arrived, or air freight hadn't arrived, but I did have a dress with me, a black dress.

And we gathered at the residence. The [Finnish] chief of protocol came in, Ossie Sunel was his name, and said, the equivalent of, "Your chariot is ready, Madame." So we went out and it was a gray day, but a gray day has wind also in Helsinki. And as I went out the front door of the residence, there in front of me was this array of limousines, the president's limousine, and the embassy's own limousine which was going to be taking other officers. They made their way down the driveway, each had a military driver, the lead car had this lovely official [presidential] flag of Finland, which is bright red with the gold lion rampant. The doors were swung open so that each chauffeur -----was standing on the far side of the car each chauffeur was standing, and the car I was to get in had this gorgeous military decked out attaché.

There are apartment houses nearby and they always fly the Finnish [national] flag, so you had these blue and white flags sort of snapping in the wind, and the neighbors all leaning out to see what the ceremony was, and I walked out, and even now as you can see when I tell it, I nearly fell apart. As I say, flags snapping, the color, as we went through the door, the heels clicking, and the salutes and the white gloves, and I said to myself, "This is not for Roz Ridgway, this is for the Ambassador of the United States. And honey, this is the only way you are going to get through this, is to remember that you are representing something, and so sort of hang on, because here we go." And I could feel my spine stiffen, I could tell I was barely holding tears back, there was a combination of elements of color and sound and ceremony, that really was wonderful.

Since I cry at parades all the time, it was tough. So we got into the limousine and proceeded slowly down the road, with the military attaché announcing to the palace where we were. And I had read all of the program as to what was to be expected of me, and so we slowed because we were a little bit ahead of schedule. The palace receives the usual parade of ambassadors, and I forget who presented credentials ahead of me that day, the Bulgarian or somebody I had to sit next to forever after.

Q: Oh, that's right.

RIDGWAY: So we slowed, and then we arrived in front of the palace. Of course it's right across from the marketplace. Again all that color, but when the people saw the flag that was being raised and recognized it as the American flag, then they all started to yell and carry on very positively.

Q: Did they?

RIDGWAY: So, we got out in front of the palace, into the palace gates, stood at the palace gates, [There are some marvelous pictures. I think the Department used one for quite some time in recruiting folders of me with this entourage behind me] while they played the national anthem. I reminded myself again, "This is for the office, not for you." And then to review the troops. Well, you try it in high heels on cobble stone. You have everything else going very nicely, and you are hanging on, and suddenly you realize that you are teetering as you review the troops. So I had to step away from the captain of the honor guard who was walking nearly shoulder to shoulder to me. It was easy for him, but I was on the hillock part of these cobble stones, that had had carriages go over them all those years, and they had ruts in them. So I stepped a little bit aside, reviewed the troops and on in.

And again this sort of everybody saluting and the like, that wasn't so bad, and going up palace staircases carpeted and so on gives you a chance to think. Although by that time, you are really so detached from it all, I think, you don't know quite where you are. And through a room with attachés and military types all lined up, to turn a corner into a room I've since been in several times, remembering to step over the transom because they have wooden transoms in Scandinavia and you certainly don't want to sort of spill over and into the room.

Finally went in to a very long ceremonial room in which as you cross the threshold and start down the room, then you see the figure at the far end, and then you begin to hear, "The honor to present the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the United States of America, Rozanne Lejeanne Ridgway." And the things are beginning to ring in your ear that you never imagined would be possible, and your name is associated with them. [There is] the pride we all have in our country, and the very real sense that you have that you're representing the world's major power.

All of this as you're advancing across the room, and I presented the letters of recall and my own letters of credence and that was all accepted. Then we sat down and had coffee. And then I was all right. And from that time on I never again, even in East Germany or on later occasions never, never felt the enormity of it all as I did on that occasion and I've never been bowled over by it all, as I clearly was at that time. I mean, that was simply, you know, you will not disgrace yourself, your country, your mother, your father, your brothers, your family or anybody else by falling apart on this occasion. But it's one of great pride and I certainly had a sense of achievement. I had a sense of specialness but I didn't have a sense of, "By God, it's about time." It was just a very nice moment, but of the kind that makes you take a very deep breath.

Q: Would you have liked some familiar face nearby at that time?

RIDGWAY: No, no, I wouldn't have seen that familiar face. I had tunnel-vision; I was going through a ceremony, straight ahead, do what's expected of you, don't trip over this, and listen to the national anthem, but make sure that as it goes through your ears it doesn't attach itself to anything that's likely to bring tears. Just hear it but let it go, that kind of thing.

Q: Keep complete control of yourself. Some women have described their swearing-in ceremony in very emotional terms too. But this apparently was . . .

RIDGWAY: I never really felt that way over the swearing-in.

Q: It affects people different ways. Where were the other people that you took with you, in all this? Did they follow you behind or did they stay outside?

RIDGWAY: No, they followed me on through, and then provided a backdrop lined up behind me while all of this went on. Then [they] were taken into a separate room to have coffee with aides and staff while I then went with the foreign minister and the chief of state.

Q: Yes, that separates the men from the boys doesn't it? This is the one who gets to stay with the chief of state.

RIDGWAY: Yeah, we went back to the residence after that and the staff asked how things had gone. I was telling them what Kekkonen had to say, and this DCM came up to me and said, "Perhaps I should remind you that conversations with the chief of state are privileged."

Q: What nerve!

RIDGWAY: Well, I thought, well here's another lesson on what's wrong with this embassy where in a small embassy, [you] don't tell your staff what the president had to say. How else are they supposed to find out?

Q: Well, it's just commonplace anyway isn't it? When you came in and all those people were at the airport, how much of the staff was there? Your DCM met you?

RIDGWAY: Yes, they were almost all there, and the chiefs of section, and of course with luggage and cars and things, a large part of the administrative staff was there, they were all there.

Q: I just wanted to clear that up. Now let's discuss the DCM. You had already selected a new one.

RIDGWAY: Yes, Sam Fry.

Q: Sam Fry is the new one. And how did you go about selecting him?

RIDGWAY: The same way Ron Spiers selected me, I asked [myself] what don't I know. And I didn't know economics, as well as I should have, I think I know them fairly well. And Sam Fry had experience in economics. Sam had also served in Moscow, so he had the Soviet experience. We had served together in Norway, I knew him, I knew we could be comfortable together. I had great admiration for his work, he's a very solid officer.

Q: Very good, so that's why you selected him. But the other one was still in post.

RIDGWAY: About four months maybe. Three or four months, not more than that.

Q: And to, a career ambassador, the one before you.

RIDGWAY: No, no, it was not career.

Q: I'm sorry, I mean non-career is what I meant to say. He had been a DCM to a non-career. So that there wasn't any problem because you knew he was leaving.

RIDGWAY: He was leaving, yes.

Q: And how long was it before Sam . . .

RIDGWAY: I think Sam turned up at the end of August. And Jean McCoubrey turned up end of August , beginning of September.

Q: Jean, I'm sorry, the last name.

RIDGWAY: Jean McCoubrey, my secretary

Q: Oh, yes, and you of course, selected her.

RIDGWAY: Yes, she had been with me in the Bahamas.

Q: Yes, I remember you mentioned that the last time. She's such a pleasant person, isn't she?

RIDGWAY: Yes, we work well together.

Q: Yes, I'm sure you do. How often did you have country team meetings and staff meetings?

RIDGWAY: Oh, gosh, I don't remember. I like meetings but I don't like too many of them. I had a country team meeting once a week, but that was a big meeting, that was everybody, secretaries, every one.

Q: Ah, hah.

RIDGWAY: Secretaries, the NCOIC, USIS, you know everybody, all officers, all American staff, except I couldn't get all the Marines in the room so it was just the NCOIC.

Q: How many Marines did you have?

RIDGWAY: I don't know, seven or eight. And then if I go by my current pattern, which I think has stayed pretty well constant, probably twice a week, chiefs of section meeting.

Q: You find that's about what it takes to keep things moving along?

RIDGWAY: It isn't that it takes that to keep things moving along, it takes that to keep people feeling related to each other.

Q: I see, relating to each other, rather than to you.

RIDGWAY: Well, they all like a direct relationship with me, but I mean if you are going to feel part of a team you've got to build a circle.

Q: What was the atmosphere at these, a collegial atmosphere?

RIDGWAY: Collegial, I like to think that everyone knew [that] their humor, bad, bawdy or otherwise was permitted. Throw problems out.

Q: Did you sit in a particular place always?

RIDGWAY: I always did, but I asked the DCM not to.

Q: What was the reason for that?

RIDGWAY: Well, I'd learned a lot at this DCM course, and had stayed in touch also with the fellow running it, Harry Wilkinson, who used to run it for the Department, and over the years had talked management, thought management. I like management, and I was aware of what I often find least attractive in large organizations, that is, you blow a whistle and tell people to line up, and they can do it instinctively, and I don't think that's always very helpful. So that in the first staff meeting, the DCM was sitting at my right and the political counselor was sitting at my left; and then the next and the next and it makes people closed off and snooty, and they end up lacking humor even in the staff meetings because they are so worried about where they are going to sit. And I just said, first come, first served, insisted that the table be filled, I didn't like having all the secretaries and communicators along the back. And Sam Fry helped me by being totally unpredictable as to where he was going to sit.

Q: He understood what you were getting at?

RIDGWAY: We talked about it, yes, we talked about it. I always sat in the same place. Well, I'll tell you something else. I mean, there is only so much of this you can do, I mean there is only so much chummy humor kind of thing you can do. But I came out of a different management system and a management set of responsibilities in the fisheries job. There I was having to build fully equal teams who had authority, and we really did work in what I call circle management.

Everyone knew each other's rank, and I didn't have to worry about whether I was getting full respect. But I was not in a traditional setting and in a traditional office or anything else. And I suppose I'd like to think of myself instinctively as a small 'd' democrat, so the questions never came up. Although I expect to be seated at the right place at the table and things of that sort. But when I got out to Finland and tried to do some of that at my first staff meeting in the bubble, I went in and everybody else had arrived. I walked over with Sam--and at that time with Bob Houston--and I walked in and everybody stood up. I said, "Oh, no, please don't, please don't." It's very dangerous. Not long after that I noticed that one of the Marines was pretty slow getting to his feet when I came in through the front door, and then a little later he barely managed to get to his feet at all, and a few days later he didn't get to his feet. And I called in the NCOIC and I said, "I don't care whether he likes me as a woman or as an officer, but I am the ambassador, and he will get to his feet or he can leave." And I found that if you become too chummy you lose that extra little bit of authority that sometimes you need to keep control. I don't mean control in terms of the psychological sense, but people have to know who's in charge, who's leading, where they are going and back to the Jimmy Carter thing, you can't give up too much of that before you lose the respect of the office.

Q: That's right.

RIDGWAY: Now, at the same time, Harry Wilkinson came to visit me and found me in a bit of a state because I was trying to do too many things. Not trying to do too many things, I was just letting them get to me. Anyhow, I've always had trouble the first six months at any post, ambassador or otherwise. I'd suggested everybody call me "Roz" and so they were at the stage where out in public, in front of other people, they were calling me "Roz", and Harry Wilkinson arrived.

Q: That's bad judgment on their part.

RIDGWAY: He just took one look at the embassy, [and] he said, "Roz you've got to back off, you can't mother this place. You're right and you are comfortable with an informal management style ." These aren't exact quotes, but the message was, you've got to put together the informal collegial with the formal, or you're going to be in trouble.

So Sam and I had a long chat about it. It wasn't that he was responsible, I had sort of started this whole thing myself. We quickly put back into place some of the, what I would call, picket fences, that make the office different. And then it all settled down after that. But I couldn't be the ambassador and one of them.

Q: How did you do that, by him giving them a little talk?

RIDGWAY: No, I just wasn't available. It's not the kind of confrontation I like, and so that when the next time somebody shook hands and looked as if they were going to lean over and also kiss me on the cheek, just keep the elbow stiff, that's all it took. I didn't have to talk to anybody directly about it. And, it hadn't gone so far that I had to explain to people that I was backing off, except to Sam.

Q: You never had to send him out to do it?

RIDGWAY: I wouldn't have done that, no. So, then it was all right.

Q: Good, because there is a bit of a mystique about the office, isn't there?

RIDGWAY: Well, there is but there's also a remoteness which is not healthy. And you have to find your way to a balance, so that you know what's happening in your mission, so people are aware of your humanity, but don't encroach in such a way that it becomes destructive of relationships within the embassy. That's what could have happened. It did not. But I was just lucky to have, frankly, a management expert, who'd stayed in touch with me over the years, come through and just spot it so quickly.

Q: Very good, and that was within this beginning period.

RIDGWAY: The very beginning period, yes.

Q: Well, I guess they don't teach you that at the ambassador's course, which you didn't take anyway.

RIDGWAY: No, and they don't teach it in the leadership forums. I took that little two day ambassador's course, but that was mostly for the political appointees. And I think people have not given a great deal of attention to these challenges of management. And I don't think anybody in the service many of the people I've met; I've often wondered if they've gone through this, or if they have, it's been quietly and they are embarrassed to talk about it. I don't know how you would warn people as they go out to take up new assignments about what some of these changes are. Or what to expect in the way of psychological challenge.

Q: No, and I think, too, perhaps some of it depends on the personality of the individual.

RIDGWAY: I think so, a large part.

Q: And how informal a style they prefer to have. Some people just happen to be very reserved anyway.

RIDGWAY: Yes, but they can also be so reserved that they need to be, in some respects, instructed as to what they miss from their staff when they are that reserved.

Q: Really, yes.

RIDGWAY: So, there's a balance in the middle, you have to put the two together, but I don't know that you teach it. I think you could at least describe the challenge.

Q: Yes, this is very interesting. Nobody else has discussed this with me. Well, what about your relationship with the head of state, and members of the cabinet and so forth.

RIDGWAY: I had very little relationship with the head, with President Kekkonen, I had very little occasion to. I had no problems with the prime minister or the foreign minister. I had access to everyone. I kept the ministerial contacts to myself. We conducted some business there, but I never minded calling on other ranking officials in the government.

Q: Did you apportion out who was to sort of get friendly with which particular officer in the government?

RIDGWAY: Sam did most of that, but you didn't have to get friendly in that fashion. It was an enormously friendly and open society. They wanted the American contact, they wanted the American ideas, it was just a question of getting it all organized, and out of all of the people who would have liked to have been close to, us not wasting it on the wrong ones, that's all. And Sam worked with the section chiefs on that. He tried to do representation, guest lists against goals and objectives and reporting requirements. That was sort of the way Sam checked it for us, to make sure that people weren't all entertaining the same folks, but not to take it away from section chiefs who liked to pursue their own friendships and their own interests and get the information in their own fashion.

Q: And you divided up the money that way, I suppose.

RIDGWAY: Well, we divided up the money, we talked about it a lot, and I'd had a lot of previous experience. In the Bahamas we had a system we took ten percent off the top against contingencies and the Fourth of July at the other end of the fiscal year. And in the pool that was remaining, everyone spent against the pool. It worked well. I announced the same system as the way I would like to go in Finland, and there was great unhappiness that came back to me through Sam. And I said, well, let's sit down, let's talk about it. So the section chiefs came in and said they really didn't trust that system. They didn't believe that the money would be available to them. So they would really just [like to know] however much it was, including nothing; they would just rather know ahead of time rather than to be fooled into thinking they had a portion of that. I don't know what that said about the previous regime. So we came up with a system that I have used since, and I've used some form of it here, which was to take the ten percent off the top and then I took fifty percent of the remainder. And then the DCM and the section chiefs did you know, twenties and tens of the remaining, sort of fifty percent of forty five percent is what it came down to. So then they had their predictable money, and you could break it down into quarters and they were all much happier with that.

Q: Yes, I see.

RIDGWAY: And then Sam watched over how that was spent.

Q: The number of things you have to be on top of when you are chief of mission is just incredible.

RIDGWAY: I don't know if you have to be; I think you do. There are colleagues out there who aren't. As I say, I've been interested, and my posts have been small enough. I don't know what life is like at a Class I mission, there's no woman around who does who is a career officer. Anne

Armstrong [ambassador to UK], Jeane Kirkpatrick [permanent representative to United Nations] do, but I certainly know how Jeane Kirkpatrick ran USUN; she was not following that kind of thing for the most part.

Q: She herself didn't follow them?

RIDGWAY: No, she didn't follow them.

Q: How about your relationship with your diplomatic colleagues, were there many other missions?

RIDGWAY: There is in any capital around the world; there is always a NATO group. There are a lot of embassies. There is always a NATO group that gets together on a monthly basis at lunch at somebody's place. That's true, as I say, around the world. And in Finland the Swedes always had a strong ambassador. I suppose it would always be my NATO colleagues, the Swedes and a few others would invite me, some of the Eastern Europeans, the Poles. But I had good colleagues. Some were like me at some mid-level of their careers, and others were retirement posts. There's always some mixture, some are brighter, some are smarter. The British and the French ambassadors were neighbors, and I got, over time, to know them and came to enjoy their company very, very much.

Q: What about third world countries?

RIDGWAY: Well, there were some, but not many.

Q: There wouldn't really be much in the way of business flora them there.

RIDGWAY: No, Brazil, Mexico, but they are the big third world countries.

Q: What about Iron Curtain diplomats?

RIDGWAY: They were all there.

Q: I mean, what was your relationship with them?

RIDGWAY: I'd occasionally see the Yugoslavs, or the Yugoslavs would come by the house on some large occasion. It was a contested field between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union considers itself almost to have pro-consular functions there. It's not true and the Finns resist it. The Soviet Ambassador and I were not close, and we were not colleagues. When I arrived the Soviet Ambassador was the dean,

Q: Was he the dean?

RIDGWAY: Did all the proper things, but we didn't stay in touch, then he left. The new Soviet Ambassador was somewhat more professional, but what are we to talk about; I mean they're trying to pull Finland east and we're trying to keep Finland in the West, so

Q: I wondered if you had Czech and Romanian colleagues?

RIDGWAY: I did. The Romanian Ambassador was a woman named Maria Stanacescu. She's still there, must nearly be the dean now, herself. We enjoyed seeing each other, but she didn't speak any known language.

Q: Yes.

RIDGWAY: The Czech Ambassador and his wife were a fascinating couple. I have since seen her because she ran away and left him and married a Finnair pilot, and she turned up on a flight one night.

Q: Oh, no.

RIDGWAY: A Finnair flight when I was going off to Europe, and there she was.

Q: Now, what about the local Finns, apart from your colleagues among the foreign ministry and so forth. How many of the locals were you able to get to know?

RIDGWAY: As many as I wanted. . . .

Q: It's very friendly. . . .

RIDGWAY: It's friendly, it's open, we have a lot of interest, they accept invitations, the newspaper editors, the sports page. The USIA and I would work together if they wanted to have an evening of talk based around a VCR, a Brzezinski press conference or something. We could fill the house up --across the political spectrum--with, if we wanted junior people, we'd get junior people, if you wanted seniors, you could get the seniors. You could get any political party, left or right. There was anyway we wanted to cut it, if we wanted to know labor better, why we invited labor.

Q: You invited labor. What about promoting American business?

RIDGWAY: I spent a lot of time doing that, working with the commercial attaché of course, and there was the confrontational, the provocative interview. My predecessor had said that the selling of ice breakers by Finland to the United States was the central issue in the relationship, and our willingness to purchase was in fact, the symbol of our understanding for Finnish foreign policy. Well, maybe he wants to set relationships up that way, but that's crazy. In my interview I said that I was not in Finland to sell Finnish ice breakers to my government, that Finland had a talented and skilled ambassador in Washington and he could sell ice breakers. I was in Finland to sell American products, and that furthermore I did not believe that ice breakers fully stated the interests and the ties between the two countries. Well, the headlines the next day were, "I'm not here to sell ice breakers," and ice breakers had become over several years the issue. The president spoke to me about it. I told him what I thought of that issue having been allowed to

move right into the center of the relationship. And we still haven't bought Finnish ice breakers, and I don't think we are going to.

Q: Because there was something wrong with them, or what?

RIDGWAY: Because it's a vessel that goes to the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard goes to the Navy in wartime, and countries nowhere buy public vessels. That's how they maintain their own shipyards.

Q: Sure, I was reading the background notes on Finland today, and I was just trying to see what sort of businesses that we conduct with them. There doesn't seem to be an awful lot that we do.

RIDGWAY: Well, there's paper. We buy paper-making machinery. We sell a lot of licensed technology. We sell aircraft, we buy yachts, a lot of the gruyere [cheese] that you eat that you think is Swiss is Finnish. And the hockey sticks in the National Hockey League are Finnish. Hockey players these days are also Finnish. Now there is a wide variety in any sophisticated economies, meaning one large one, one small. And that economy has just done so well, and we are doing well in Finland. I'm very pleased, I like to think I was associated with part of that by getting the ice breakers out and saying, "This is nonsense, we ought to be straightening up the trade issues on cheese, on hockey sticks, and on specialty steel and getting to some of these central questions and you ought to stop appealing to me and get yourself some good representation in Washington and learn about regulatory agencies and grow up."

Q: And was your commercial attaché able to sort of encourage American businesses to come over there and bid on things?

RIDGWAY: Well, look, there's a total misunderstanding about what you can do in the US government and what commercial attachés do. Commercial attachés for the most part are helping the small businessman who hasn't the faintest idea what to do and has a few things of something to sell. The big outfits, McDonnell Douglas and IBM and Xerox and 3M, they send their own people, thank you very much, they do not need American commercial attachés to make their appointments for them. But they do like to be able to call on the ambassador; they like to be able to talk about the general economic and political atmosphere; and if they are opening a new firm or cutting a ribbon for a new addition I always went. And if they had problems, importing things into Finland, or getting a fair bid on something, I was quite willing to associate myself with those problems.

Q: Were you ever in a position where you would hear about things and therefore alert some of the big ones back here, or do they always know about these things?

RIDGWAY: It depends on how big it is.

Q: Say they want a new phone system?

RIDGWAY: No, they know all that stuff. Sure, we'd report it. We'd see the little newspaper announcement or we'd hear that Helsinki is going to put in a new central switching system. We'd

send in a business opportunity, but by the time we get there, the world switching community knows that the Helsinki system is either out of date or is coming up for renewal, and they're already there. McDonnell Douglas knew from the outset that Airbus was trying to push them around; there's not much that we do there. Once that arises then we help put their case forward. But they know, they come marching in about the same time you've discovered it and they've known it all along. And they also don't want us to handle it until it runs into a problem.

Q: Well, other than the ice breakers, what were your major policy problems?

RIDGWAY: I didn't have any policy problems. What I was trying to do was change the nature of the dialogue from a lot of fluff about how nice it is that these two friendly countries are around and how nice the Finns are because they have a sauna and they ski and they run, and get some understanding of what Finland is and is not. Get some understanding back here about what the US interests were, try to find a definition of Finnish independence and neutrality which was common to both sides, so that the Finns knew when we thought they were not being as neutral as they said they were.

On the other hand, Washington had to know when it came out and said, please express our concerns to the Finns that they are too cozy with the Russians or something, that the Finns alone had to manage that Soviet relationship. We are not prepared to defend Finland in time of war. Finland knows that. They paid for it twice. And I wasn't about to carry out instructions that had me go in and tell the Finns to get tough with the Soviets.

But there were other ways to tell the Finns to look to their own interests in how they were dealing with the Soviets. The political consultation needed broadening to include arms control and the issues of East-West politics. So we worked very hard at that. I had all the up front stuff, I could have given an interview every day, I could have been on television every day. No matter where I went, people took my picture, so all of that was not the problem.

The problem was on the professional side, to establish the links of serious discussion with the Finns, and to let Finnish professionals who had had no real dialogue, know that we had a serious embassy. And this was true whether it was the foreign affairs editor of Helsingin Sanomat, the big newspaper, the international affairs director of the Social Democratic Party. These people needed to know that they had serious interlocutors in the United States, and we spent a lot of money on seminars and dinners and late hours and things of that sort. And the sense that we were a professional team. And some of that has held over.

Jean, one time, said, "you are putting so much effort into this restructuring the administrative procedures in the embassy and identifying the fact that the household staff, many of whom had been there ten or eleven years, had no retirement program, no ambassador had ever cared." A good administrative officer had brought to my attention all of these anomalies on retirement and job descriptions, [and] got that all cleaned up. Jean said, "How long do you think this is going to last after you leave?" And I said, "With luck five years. Because if people don't follow up it will erode. But at least for five years there will be a solid embassy here." She stayed in Finland after I left, came back to Washington, and I think if you asked her, she would say it was about right. It was about five years.

Q: In other words, this thrust of yours was done through all the different sections of the embassy, it was a full frontal attack.

RIDGWAY: Not that the embassy wasn't functioning, but it was a sort of plasticized operation and it didn't have depth to it.

Q: Well, maybe nobody really realized how they could all work together.

RIDGWAY: Well, it wasn't that, but I think you have leadership with different objectives, different understandings. My predecessor did some very important things, and I've had to pick up after him in other places. But he was a PR man. The American Embassy sat there quietly for thirty years just being there, nice people, but just being there. He came in, big PR blitz, moved up the visibility of the American Embassy, he kicked open doors that he was allowed to get by with because everybody thought he was an amateur. I walked in, and I didn't shut those doors. I left them open and then walked through them as a professional. I was not the one; if those doors hadn't been open when I arrived, I would not have opened them. I would have been in the earlier tradition of the quiet professional performer, but he had gained such visibility for the American Embassy that I just kept that level there. But what we needed then was to put something behind it, we had to be seen as serious people. And I didn't want to give any more speeches on how nice the Finns are, I wanted to give speeches to the Finns on what the responsibilities of a neutral are and what the responsibilities of a global power are.

Q: You had a good admin team?

RIDGWAY: Absolutely, I had a good team, period, all across the board.

Q: Were you able to select any others as vacancies opened up?

RIDGWAY: No.

Q: No, that is always done back here. What about policy guidance from the Department?

RIDGWAY: Worked it very well, Bob Funseth was the country director for Northern Europe, a job Ford Cooper has at the moment, and I should quickly tell you that Ford Cooper later became my special assistant when I was counselor, and DCM to Paraguay. I supported his application to be DCM in Helsinki. He returned to Helsinki as DCM. When he left Helsinki as DCM he came back here as country director for Northern Europe. We were answering something else.

Q: We were talking about policy guidance in the Department.

RIDGWAY: Funseth was the country director for NE. We had a very open relationship, he was very supportive. We could talk back and forth, and I never moved beyond that level. I didn't need to. I'm always happy to operate without guidance, thank you. And we all were very comfortable with him as NE and Bill Dameron, who is also back in the bureau, was the Finnish Desk Officer,

good relationships. And we had money, people traveled out to the field, more often than we went home, but we did very well.

Q: What about VIP's, did you get many CODELs (Congressional Delegations)?

RIDGWAY: No.

Q: What about the secretary? Did he come?

RIDGWAY: No, the vice president came once. Mrs. Mondale came on her own, once, for Finland's sixtieth birthday in 1977, December of '77, and returned in '78 or '79, I forget which, with the vice president on a visit. Chief Justice Burger and Mrs. Burger visited once. The then secretary of labor, Ray Marshall and his wife and entourage visited. But we were not a way-station.

Q: Were you glad of that?

RIDGWAY: In a way. We were all having a good time, an easy time up there, but they can be, if done right, an extra resource, and they show that we are interested and paying attention. It's like your picture with the President, it's a tool, and it can be very helpful. There was no easy way to get to Helsinki, you were always changing planes somewhere and so people would fly over us or around us.

Q: Sure, one question that I haven't asked you is that when you went out there, what were you hoping to achieve, or had you not quite formulated what you wanted to do?

RIDGWAY: Hadn't quite formulated it. I'm glad now I didn't. I just probably would have had to discard all the ideas, because you have no feeling for it. I think you have to [recognize] it's false to do it here, you've got to get out there and take a look at it.

Q: Sure. We've already talked about your treatment by the local press, which you said was excellent. Did any US reporters ever come?

RIDGWAY: Very few, I don't remember any. They were there from the New York Herald Tribune, they would stop in, you know, Johnny Apple and people like that, but I didn't see that many.

Q: But wouldn't they stop in to see you?

RIDGWAY: If they came to town, they would stop in and see me.

Q: To be briefed, I'm sure. How about consular problems?

RIDGWAY: No, we didn't have any consular problems, a local who drank too much. We didn't have problems. There was a Communist Party in Finland, and membership in the Communist Party is excludable, so every so often some high-ranking person would get his visa refused until

we could get a waiver. And every so often they'd get angry that they had to carry a visa that showed a waiver, but those weren't major problems.

Q: You wouldn't probably have many American welfare cases?

RIDGWAY: Over a period of time a couple of cases of, you know, of kidnapped children from divorces and stuff. You get the wandering American, or the dead American, but it was just normal small post consular stuff.

Q: Any problems relating to your attachés or

RIDGWAY: Well, there's always a problem reminding people that you're not going to permit them to send anything out of the embassy that you haven't seen. And that attachés do not run their own foreign policy. But that didn't hurt, and something that got taken care of. Sam Fry was an excellent kind of a DCM, and everybody began to see that it paid off, and we didn't have problems. And I went to the attaché's homes when they invited me, and they sometimes accompanied me on my trips, the Army attaché and his wife did. No, there were no problems once you just simply made it clear you weren't going to put up with it, period.

Q: And that would also concern intramural rivalry, so to speak, you didn't permit that and they knew that.

RIDGWAY: They knew it, because I was there.

I had a lot of other stuff going on. I mean I was always, in the years afterwards, shocked to find out who was sleeping with whom or wasn't. I didn't know that stuff, or marriages that were on the rocks, how would I know?

Q: Did you have much trouble with alcoholism?

RIDGWAY: We had one Foreign Service National who had a severe alcohol problem, who'd been carried for years and it was just wrong. We had a great deal of agony, somehow people thought we ought to take care of him. We offered to, he wasn't interested, so we let him go. He was very valuable and bright man but anyhow he left. I think, among the American staff, I didn't see any spouses, some did.

Q: Not that you were aware of?

RIDGWAY: Yes, that I was aware of, but what do you do with spouses?

Q: Lets see now, how about inspectors, did you have Foreign Service Inspectors?

RIDGWAY: Yeah, we had an inspection while I was there.

Q: How did they treat you?

RIDGWAY: Well, they treated me very well.

Q: How did you handle official entertainment?

RIDGWAY: In what way?

Q: Who did the actual ordering of the food and . . .

RIDGWAY: I had a housekeeper, a very fine housekeeper.

Q: Was she Finnish?

RIDGWAY: She was Finnish, and a good cook. I lost a couple of cooks while I was there which are always traumatic occasions

Q: Oh, isn't it though?

RIDGWAY: But I worked with her, and we kept our menus about three weeks ahead of time. Jean and I did guest lists, but when I was entertaining I always had themes. It might be a political section proposal, so I would ask them to help me with the guest list, and then I would add a few names of people that I knew and wanted to include. Jean would get to work with local staff that had a little extra time and they did up the invitations and made the phone calls and things. The housekeeper did the local shopping and worked with me on the gross ordering from the PX in Frankfurt.

Q: Frankfurt, you got food from Frankfurt. How often did you order that?

RIDGWAY: About every two months or so. And the housekeeper and I worked on flowers, do one bouquet or three, that kind of stuff.

Q: Now, was this housekeeper a trained person when you got her, or did you have to . . .

RIDGWAY: She'd been in the household for about twelve years.

Q: Oh, good.

RIDGWAY: A little bit of a contest as to whose house it was.

Q: I'm sure, now what did you do? You had seated dinners I presume?

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: And lunches of course.

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: Did you bother with having a host? Or did you just host by yourself?

RIDGWAY: No.

Q: I know sometimes the DCM's have stood in as hosts.

RIDGWAY: No, if I wanted to have a one-on-one lunch, I had a one-on-one lunch. And if I wanted to have a dinner, I didn't pretend there was a host. I often got to the stage where on most large dinners I sat in the middle of the table, which put the guest of honor across from me, male or female. Otherwise the most junior American there was sometimes stuck at the other end.

Q: And did you try to include your staff at something on a rotating basis?

RIDGWAY: Yes. It wasn't so rotating; that doesn't sound quite right, but I kept track of who had been to the house, but depending on what kind of a dinner it was . . .

Q: Okay, but you managed to include everybody for something.?

RIDGWAY: Well, regularly. They were always at the house; there were always Americans at every occasion, except the one-on-one lunches.

Q: What about things like the Fourth of July and Christmas?

RIDGWAY: I got rid of the large Fourth of July entertainment and just did the cup of champagne kind of thing.

Q: And signing a book?

RIDGWAY: Signing a book from eleven to one thirty.

Q: You didn't have one of these all-out American bashes?

RIDGWAY: No, no.

Q: Anything for Thanksgiving, Christmas?

RIDGWAY: Well, I have a great Thanksgiving tradition I've sort of carried from post to post. I started in Manila. I would work the residence, and we'd pick up everybody who wasn't tied down, people in from Moscow or somewhere for the weekend. They'd brought the courier pouch over. Thanksgivings usually began around eleven in the morning and ended about three a.m. the next morning. And there was the group that all brought something for dinner, and then there was the group that had had other things at home, they came in afterwards for dessert. And there was another group that turned up in the evening. Thanksgiving was always done like that. Christmas, I believe I was there only one Christmas, and I didn't try to do anything. We had an embassy Christmas Party, of course, at the residence, but I think I spent one Christmas there and I was back in Minnesota for one Christmas.

Q: Did your people, your various section chiefs come to you and say for example, "I would very much like to have you invite so and so in the community?"

RIDGWAY: Yes, yes.

Q: So you did set it up that way, I see. And then of course they did their own inviting too.

RIDGWAY: They did their own, but they would make proposals.

Q: That's what I wanted to get at, yes.

RIDGWAY: And USIA was especially active on that as they would identify groups and we would have buffets, very casual, blue jean type buffets and such. Trying to get to the younger groups. I could always invite the Minister of something, but you get down to the Third Secretary level or the sports editor, for you know he's going to someday be the international affairs editor, talk to him early, those people. USIA were very good at that.

Q: Sure, and those are the ones to whom it's very, very important to go to the residence. They are not blasé about it, it's something they really remember. What about-on-the-job training for young officers, did you have any young officers there that you had to train?

RIDGWAY: We had one a young man named Larry Butler who sort of got the full weight of all of our desire to have a good mark in our efficiency report for training young officers. It's a wonder he survived it. [laughter]

Q: So, what did he do, rotate from one to another?

RIDGWAY: No, he was an economic officer. I don't recall that he rotated, no, he stayed in econ. But we criticized his writing and the way he dressed, and the way he acted and all kinds of things. [laughter] He married a very, very nice girl from there, he's a father now.

Q: He married a Finn?

RIDGWAY: He married a Finn and he's back in Finland as the Chief of the Economic section.

Q: Is he? Tell me when you marry a Finn now, you don't have to leave the Service?

RIDGWAY: Not any more, that's all gone.

Q: Okay. Now, here is a terrible question. Can you think of any of your major successes and tell whether or not being a woman contributed to them?

RIDGWAY: I had at the end. There was one major success that caps the whole thing, and I think if you ask anybody who knows Finland, or ask any Finn who has watched the scene, I think it is still the major American diplomatic success for the last ten years.

Q: Really?

RIDGWAY: And why it should be is, I suppose, part of the Finnish scene, part of the Finnish-American dialogue which has always been difficult. Americans have trouble understanding neutrals. The Finns are western but have that long border with the Soviet Union. I spoke of deepening the dialogue and trying to bring the necessary subtleties and nuance to it, explaining the relationships so they could function intelligently as various issues came along. I had been making a lot of speeches and just spending a lot of time talking with an awful lot of people over those two and a half years, from the north of the country to the south, and doing a tango with some communist mayor up in Rovaniemi, to who knows what. Sort of long boozy afternoons with the former minister and former prime minister, as he reminisced over the Finnish-Soviet relationship.

When I got ready to leave in February of '80. I knew I was going to be leaving. I knew from December of '79 that I would be leaving. And I came back to post after having been home for Christmas, arrived back in post in January and sat with the staff and said, "Don't you really think that it's time we tried to express to a major Finnish audience what this relationship is all about?" We've been working to try to state it, we've been working to try and understand it, and if I'm leaving, is it possible for me to make a speech to what's called the Paasikivi Society, which is the Finnish Council on Foreign Relations.

The inquiry was put out to them and the answer came back that no ambassador had ever addressed the Paasikivi Society. We said, well, a first time for everything. And they thought about it and came back and said, yes.

If you look at history, Finland had to abstain on the vote in the United Nations criticizing Soviet entry into Afghanistan. And the Finns were tormented that they could not participate. For days they knew this vote was coming, and which way would Finland vote? We were under pressure from Washington to push them one way or the other. I went in and I made the case, but I would not push, and they abstained. And they didn't know how to feel about that, that was a tough one for them. And they saw themselves as Afghanistan. And the world had abstained on Finland, and so they, suddenly all these years later, had to abstain on Afghanistan.

In the middle of this, of course, came this speech at the Paasikivi Society, and we really worked our butts off on that speech. And the technique we had developed was I gave my speeches in English and I had a woman who had interpreted for me. The speech was already interpreted and written out, and she and I read it together. We rehearsed that speech, and Jean was part of the audience in the living room as we gave that speech, over and over again, and where it wasn't smooth, rewrote it and the rest.

Q: People had copies of the speech?

RIDGWAY: At the time, we were working it, but people hearing it didn't have it. Anyway, the speech was given. I sent the speech, that speech that was to be given, to the president because it was a foreign affairs speech, and in Finland President Kekkonen really had the foreign affairs

voice. I said, I didn't know whether he was planning to attend or not, but here was my speech. And come the evening, the Passikivi Society was jammed and there was the one seat up front, the audience laid out like this, the one seat in front of it. The President turned up to hear this speech, to give it obviously his blessing, because he had it. It talked about trade, it talked about Finland's [role], the role of the United States, the history of the relationship, all kinds of things. But the line that mattered, was the line that said, "The United States wants for Finland what Finland wants for itself, a credible neutrality." That remains the definition of American policy interests in Finland. And to this day, if you ask around, people will tell you that that speech, that occasion, is, and continues to be the expression of US-Finnish relations.

Q: And it was very well received?

RIDGWAY: Absolutely, it was well received. So, it was a cap-stone to be able to have myself, the stature to get up, to give a speech, to command the audience, to have the attention, to get the President there to bless this line, and to . . .

Q: That's terrific.

RIDGWAY: . . . to set for, what appears to be a lasting period, the framework within which we deal with each other. And I didn't write the speech, it was written by the information officer, against some ideas that I had. We all worked on it, Ford, everybody, that was THE message, and then there we were with the backdrop of Afghanistan. It relieved people. I expressed understanding, if not approval. I didn't put it in a much more delicately constructed speech, but that was the line.

Q: Yes, that must have been an anguishing time for them

RIDGWAY: It was.

Q: Because as you put it, they were Afghanistan. Did you feel that you had any unresolved problems when you left?

RIDGWAY: Oh sure, mostly in the trade field. And there will always be as trade grows between two countries, you get a constancy of problems.

Q: But on the whole you felt your mission had been a success?

RIDGWAY: Oh, yes. Very much so. Oh, I left on a great rush of sense of achievement on my own part, an embassy fully functioning, enormous amounts of affection from hundreds of Finns who streamed through the house to say good-byes.

Q: That is the key I think to whether or not you've succeeded, isn't it?

RIDGWAY: Well, you can leave quietly and people can receive you well, but not take you seriously. It was the combination of the two that I think made it especially satisfying.

Q: Yes, now, we've gone over these. Did you have any problem with the wives at the embassy?

RIDGWAY: Oh, there were always problems, but . . .

Q: I'm not putting that very well. What I mean is, in many embassies there are women's groups and oftentimes the wife of the ambassador is the head of this. Well, of course, you didn't have a wife.

RIDGWAY: That's right, so I became the honorary head of it.

Q: Oh, so, you did it anyway. Oh!

RIDGWAY: They also had an elected head, but I went to all the meetings.

Q: Oh, you did?

RIDGWAY: Sure. We changed the name to "the spouses." The few men that we had didn't normally turn up, but I went. And I belonged, there was a Finnish-American women's group, I went to that.

Q: Oh, you did.

RIDGWAY: And took up the honorary chairmanship there. I enjoyed it, they were all interesting women.

Q: I'm surprised you had the time.

RIDGWAY: I made the time.

Q: Well, this is out of the pattern. That's very interesting. Sometimes it is the DCM's wife who does it.

RIDGWAY: Well, Sam Fry was a bachelor.

Q: Sam Fry is a bachelor?

RIDGWAY: We got to laughing we were starting to run a club for singles out there.

Q: But would you have done it anyway?

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: You would have done it anyway. Parenthetically that is funny, isn't it? How about recreation, sports. What did you do to keep yourself in trim?

RIDGWAY: Well, this was before aerobics ever hit the United States, I went to an aerobics class twice a week and was a great fan of the sauna. We had a sauna in the house which I found very restful. Skiing on all my trips, we always had the skis on top of the car. A lot of my visits with mayors were, in fact, five or ten kilometers out skiing and then back.

Q: Is that right, is this cross-country?

RIDGWAY: Yes, it was cross-country. I belonged to a golf club. I tried tennis, but the courts were too far away, so I gave it up. I belonged to the golf club.

Q: Very good, and you traveled around all over the country, didn't you?

RIDGWAY: Traveled around all over, yes.

Q: Any other speaking engagements, did you speak quite often?

RIDGWAY: Well, wherever I visited, if they wanted a speech I would give one.

Q: Rotary and that stuff

RIDGWAY: Well, they didn't have that many, and I didn't do it quite like that. I did the Finnish-American Chamber of Commerce, or a university, or a seminar, a graduation, something like that.

Q: Yes, yes, lots of speeches.

RIDGWAY: But they were principally impromptu speeches in the course of a visit.

Q: Did you always have the same translator with you?

RIDGWAY: I tried to.

Q: Was she a FSN (Foreign Service National)?

RIDGWAY: Yes.

Q: How did you get along with learning Finnish?

RIDGWAY: Well, I took an hour every day, first thing in the morning, not with any hope of learning it. It's a hard language, it's a ten month course over at FSI, but I enjoyed talking with the teacher, who was a Finn and who knew about Finnish language and literature, and I tried to learn a little bit about Finland through the language. I learned enough Finnish to be able to read through the paper in the morning and know generally what was news, so that I could ask what people might translate, rather than be told what they were going to translate. I was just more comfortable that way.

Q: Sure, sure.

RIDGWAY: And I gave one speech in Finnish while I was there, in fact the way the Finns give speeches, which is in Finnish, and Swedish or Norwegian. I had the Norwegian, so I practiced and practiced and practiced and gave one speech and brought the house down and made the front pages of the newspaper. And that was the end. Because it's an impossible language, and it had just taken too much effort to do that. I had enjoyed my moment showing off. Danny Kaye was in the audience on that occasion, and he was very impressed because you know he's got a marvelous ear. He thought my accent was pretty good, and my Swedish accent brought down the house because it was Norwegian, and they really laughed. They liked that.

Q: We mentioned before at the beginning of the impact of power on your personal feelings, on the very first day. As you settled into the job, how did that impact on your own feelings and your own image of yourself, being the chief?

RIDGWAY: It was easily absorbed in time.

Q: Was it?

RIDGWAY: Yeah, I don't think about it now. In fact there are occasions now, I am surprised at how much I have. But in time it became, it wore very comfortably. It's amalgamated now, it's far less that separate feeling.

Q: Yes, and also you have had this for so many years.

RIDGWAY: Yes, since '76 now in all of the settings, you know.

Q: Yes, but it must take getting used to. Now, what about the loneliness of being chief of a mission. We also touched on that a little bit.

RIDGWAY: Well, it was lonely. I had a lovely bedroom with a fireplace in it, and a yellow chair with an ottoman, and I would spend an awful lot of time there. I had a lovely study as well. I did a lot of reading, spent a lot of time alone, but I'm the kind of person who requires a great deal of space, so some of it didn't trouble me. If there were problems in the embassy, of strange variety, of complaints that American children ought to be able to eat peanut butter sandwiches in school instead of blood sausage. Things that would just annoy me, that the people would threaten important community relationships by wanting to fight with the Finnish school system over peanut butter. I would spend a lot of time on those occasions sort of wandering around and pacing and being very angry, and I think if somebody would have been around, that was fine. For years I traveled around with an old battered Royal typewriter, now so battered it had to be given away, and would write long letters home to my mother which didn't translate these problems, because she wasn't interested in that, but I would run through the calendar and share with her some of the things that had been happening. I enjoyed the reading. I never minded [being alone]. I had a terribly heavy social schedule in Finland. I turned down as many invitations as I accepted. I loved my evenings alone. You know, every two weeks the lady would come in to do the pedicure and the manicure, and you'd sort of spoil yourself. And on Friday nights after dinner

the housekeeper would have turned the sauna on, which is itself a rather lonely, quiet experience, at least in the house, because I didn't have anybody else to share the sauna with. I didn't mind. It was lonely, but as I say, I have a great requirement for space. I solved problems by myself.

Q: You like quiet.

RIDGWAY: I like quiet, I love to read. Quite content to be in the place alone, it just

Q: Soothing. Recharge your batteries. Well, I can see that when you're with people all the time.

RIDGWAY: With people, and I couldn't step out the door without having somebody flash a camera in my face.

Q: Yeah, how does that goldfish bowl existence bother you?

RIDGWAY: It didn't, I loved it, had a wonderful time..

Q: Good, good.

RIDGWAY: It's kind of nice to be famous, you know.

Q: Of course it is.

RIDGWAY: You know you go anywhere in the city and people say, oh, there's the American ambassador. And in a country that's friendly if on a Saturday I decide to go do some shopping, I'd be strolling down the street and I could always tell when people were pointing at their neighbors, and it would always make me smile.

Q: And telling them who it was, yes. What about the official car, did you have occasions to use the flag very much?

RIDGWAY: I used the flag all the time. Friendly countries, before terrorism reached the level it has now. . .

Q: Before terrorism. How much things have changed,? Did you have any health problems?

RIDGWAY: I got sick a couple of times on too much to do and too many cream sauces that would sort of produce an upset stomach. A bad weekend or two wondering whether you had the flu or not. The doctor would pop in to say slow down, knock off the cream sauces for a while.

Q: Sort of an ulcer, a pre-ulcerous thing?

RIDGWAY: No, it was just, it was never pre-anything, it was too much rich food and too little time to think.

Q: And when you are tired, it doesn't work. Did you have any personal dangers at this time?

RIDGWAY: No.

Q: Thank goodness. What about major honors and awards?

RIDGWAY: I guess it was in '78 that I got . . . my alma mater gave me my honorary LL.D.

Q: Uh huh.

RIDGWAY: I went to Finland having just received an Annual National Fisheries Institute Award for Person of the Year. That was nice, they awarded that out in Hawaii, so I took my mother out there to pick that up.

Q: How nice, that she was able to share that with you. That would be just before you went?

RIDGWAY: That would be '77.

Q: That would be '77. Fine. Now, let me see, where are we here? Well, now, you were not yet married, so those aren't applicable, they will be at the next post, these questions about that. All right now, wrapping up your experience in Finland

The following are excerpts from an interview of Ambassador Ridgway by Willis Armstrong in 1991.

RIDGWAY: So in March of '77 I talked with Carol Laise, Bob Brewster, people like that who were involved in personnel, and went to Finland as ambassador in July of '77.

Q: You were in Finland autumn of '77.

RIDGWAY: July of '77.

Q: I hadn't known or heard of you until I went to Finland on a visit in '78, and talked to the Finnish branch of the International Chamber of Commerce which I was then with. I asked people, "Who is our ambassador?" and they said, "Miss RIDGWAY, we haven't really met her yet and we don't really know her very well." I was always busy with Chamber of Commerce matters and I simply didn't bother embassies in those days.

RIDGWAY: It was a great time. I loved it.

Q: I had my R&R in Finland from Moscow 1940 in between the wars. How long were you in Finland?

RIDGWAY: Three years, actually two and a half years--from July of '77 to February of 1980 at which time the Department called me back to be Counselor.

Q: Yes, I remember that. How did you get along with the Finns?

RIDGWAY: Beautifully. I mean I am today a daughter of Finland, and Finland is my second "home" and we, the Finns and I, both feel mutual affection and mutual regard. And I have great respect for the Finns and what they're trying to do for foreign policy. I learned a lot about representing the economic interests of the United States before it became fashionable to talk about economic interests (make a lot of contacts). I enjoyed it immensely.

Q: A lot of people I know in intelligence have been very distressed over time by the Finns' arrangements to sell specialized ships and a lot of other things to the USSR, but everybody recognizes that the Finns were so ingenious as to turn the reparation requirement into an economic development project that they don't really argue with it.

RIDGWAY: Of course, they've gone broke now.

Q: Have they gone broke?

RIDGWAY: They've gone broke and they're the subject of major law suits by Carnival Cruise Lines. It's sort of the current scandal.

Q: Really. That's too bad, because they were first class people, I thought. It was a specialized market because about the only people who can afford those ships anymore are the Taiwanese.

RIDGWAY: The cruise business is terrific, but they mismanaged their cruise business in ways I don't entirely understand. They got into some contracts that they expected to meet by having the continuation of government subsidies in certain areas. The government subsidies were withdrawn, they couldn't complete the contracts. Carnival Cruise Lines didn't care whether the Finns were nice people in blue helmets or not, they wanted their money or their ships, and they are suing. The cruise line business in which Wartsila was the best in the world, would have kept them going if they had managed properly, but it got mismanaged.

Q: I'm about to take a cruise on a Finnish ship--the North Cape Cruise from Copenhagen. I handled Scandinavian affairs when Carl Rowan was ambassador and then visited him there. I visited before him.

RIDGWAY: With all due respect to Carl Rowan, I and my successor, Jim Goodby, along with, I think, Tyler Thompson who was in at the end of the '60s, the three of us are the only career ambassadors Finland has seen. I don't know about Tyler Thompson's stewardship there. I can tell you when I arrived, the Finns were especially--grateful is the right word actually-- at our desire to have a substantive conversation, continuing diplomatic substantive dialogue with them. They were a little tired of Finland described as saunas, and skiers, and people who pay their debts. They did not think that their Finnish foreign and security policy was completely understood, as it was not. I think that Jim and I between '77 and the summer of '81 when Jim left, gave them four years of a solid consultative process that they valued very much. It's such a small society that once the word gets out that you're interested, that you're dealing with them as equals in the

foreign policy sense-- security policy, economic policy--then it goes through the whole society, and he and I both had superb experiences there and have kept the ties.

The following are excerpts from an interview of Ambassador Ridgway by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: In 1977, you went to Finland as our ambassador. You were there until February, 1980. Did you have any problems in getting White House approval of your nomination, since that position is often filled by a political appointee?

RIDGWAY: Not really. I was offered a different embassy first, which I initially accepted. When I went home and began to consider the assignment, I came to the conclusion that the offer was not a very substantive one. I had traveled the world for two years; I had finished concluding a series of important international agreements; I had been an ambassador for what I considered major issues; and I thought I deserved more consideration than I what was being offered.

I had visited Finland during my travels. I sat down with a friend and we took out an atlas; we covered each country that was available alphabetically. When we got to Finland, I realized that that was the right assignment for me. The next day, I went to see the Director General again and asked for Finland, which was okay with the Department.

Q: What were the major issues in U.S.-Finnish relations that you had to contend with?

RIDGWAY: There weren't many, but the European scene had a lot of topics at the time that were of interest to the Finns. In the first place, the Conference on Security and Cooperation had concluded in Helsinki in 1975. The participants had signed the final act there. Finland had been a major player in these negotiations, and therefore, had an interest in doing what it could to soften the edges of the east-west confrontation. They were, after all, part of the east-west boundaries. They were very active diplomats in giving life to the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

In the Spring of 1977, at one of the periodic review conferences on progress toward the goals established by the Final Act, the United States, which was represented by a team which included some well know people and which was headed by Arthur Goldberg, raised hell with the Soviets about their human rights record. The Europeans were startled by our approach. However, Ford and Kissinger had been chastised by the Republican conservatives for signing the Helsinki Final Act, which this group viewed as de-facto recognition of Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe without any benefit to the U.S. The administration countered by claiming that much progress had been made in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union on human rights.

At the first review conference, the American administration set out to show that it insisted that the human rights provisions of the Final Act be followed strictly. That conference, held in Belgrade, ended up in chaos after the U.S. strategy became obvious. No one knew how to deal with the U.S. position; both the Soviets and the Europeans became upset. The United States was pretty proud of itself.

The Finns, after these various blow-ups, were still trying to manage the atmosphere in the hopes of salvaging something from this first review conference. In addition to the human rights issues, the conference also became involved in a discussion of the Pershing and the SS-20 missiles which principally involved NATO. The major issue was whether, and how, the U.S. would respond to the placement in Europe of the Soviet SS-20s and whether the Soviets were prepared to submit a negotiating proposal, as well as a re-armament policy.

During my ambassadorial tour, Afghanistan also became part of the dialogue, as did the U.S. position on participation in the Moscow Olympics of 1980. That is, in short, a description of the political issues that we faced in our relations with Finland during my tour in Helsinki.

Finland, at the time, was not high on Washington's agenda. Washington, frankly, did not understand it. It may even have bought into Franz Joseph Strauss' *Finlandization*, i.e., that somehow the Finns had sold out because they were so close to the USSR. Washington didn't know Finnish history and didn't pay much attention to the country. It knew nothing of Finnish society or its economy, which was more capitalist than any other northern European economy – more than Sweden, Norway, or Denmark. The economy had a very small state segment – an important, but hardly major factor. It had been created to pay reparations that the Soviets had demanded at the end of WWII.

The Finns were very interested in American markets. In Finland, U.S. ambassadors had had business as their major and most interesting focus, long before the Seventh Floor decided that ambassadors had to pay more attention to American business in their country of assignment. We were trying to sell aircraft to Finnair. We had some commercial disputes. Other issues included: the American hockey stick industry didn't like what the Finns were doing in their business, and cheese. We also assisted Finnish firms trying to gain a foothold in the U.S. market. Finlandia Vodka was having a very difficult time getting a share in the American market and was always looking for advice on how to improve their position. Nokia, a brand new firm which had got its start with the manufacture of the timing mechanisms for the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics, was beginning to manufacture their wares in Atlanta and Houston.

There were other issues: Finns wanted to sell their ice-breakers to the U.S. Coast Guard, which was a real non-starter. When I told the Finns that, it made for big headlines in the local papers. While we manufactured our own, I don't know how good they were, as I remember one had to be towed back from Antarctica, when the screws fell off. But they were American!

The Finns were very active internationally in such activities as peace keeping and other UN activities which were essentially ignored by Washington leadership. However, I do believe that there were people in Washington that found Finnish views on international matters helpful and interesting, particularly on what was happening in Moscow and in Europe.

Q: How did you find Finnish relations with the Soviets?

RIDGWAY: Very carefully done. The Finnish president had always been responsible for Finnish foreign policy and national security matters. Urho Kekkonen was the president while I was in

Finland. He may have been viewed as suspect by many people in Washington – perhaps for good reasons, but I didn't know. The prevalent view was that the Finns would manage their relations with the Soviet Union, keeping their national security uppermost in their minds. They were not about to challenge the Soviets on matters which they thought the Soviets would misinterpret. What Washington didn't understand, or wasn't willing to take into consideration, was that the Finns had lost 10 percent of their male youths fighting the Soviets. The Soviets knew full well that if they ever made a move on Finland, the Finns had a standing military force that was severely limited by a WWII peace treaty, but a reserve force of 600,000 men that could be called up in 48 hours. I can tell you that all of those men would have rushed to arms. The Finns were known to be fierce fighters; I doubt that there was a single Soviet soldier who wished to return to Finland to fight another war. As a result, there was a very delicate balance.

The Soviet experiences in Finland in WWII from 1939 to 1940 and from 1941 to 1943 had not been good. Until the lakes froze, they were getting beaten by the Finns. Once the Soviets could cross those lakes, they outmatched the Finns, who had ran out of manpower. After all, the Finnish population was 4 million and the Soviet Union 200 million. The Finns were fierce fighters. They wiped out a Soviet division in one night on one occasion, so I doubt that the Soviets were anxious to return to Finland.

Q: What was the situation with the Karelians?

RIDGWAY: Western Karelia had been ceded to the Soviets after the 1939 Russian-Finnish war and there was no movement to return to the pre-war borders. The Karelians were not interested in irredentism. I have talked to Finns in recent years and there are Karelian societies, but no signs of irredentism. In any case, the Finns can see what has happened to that area and are not interested in having it back – too expensive. About 400,000 Finns were repatriated after WWII; they had been displaced by Karelia being ceded to the Soviets. In this way, the majority of the displaced had been taken care of.

I don't think Washington was able to handle the nuances of Finnish foreign policy. I think the bureaucracy viewed the Finns as "neutral." It didn't know whether the Finns would be for or against any particular U.S. policy. John Foster Dulles used to say that there could not be any "neutrals." President Bush has essentially taken the same attitude, particularly in respect to terrorism and related U.S. activities. Folks don't like neutrals. I should add that the Finns were certainly not neutral about "democracy" or "capitalism," which were two issues of great interest to the United States, but on which Washington never understood Finland.

Q: Was there any spillover into U.S.-Finnish relations from the problems we had with the Swedes and Olaf Palme.

RIDGWAY: No. The reactions in the two countries were not the same.

Q: How were Finnish-Swedish relations?

RIDGWAY: They were proper. They had a long history together. Sweden owned Finland for 800 years. I used to read the Swedish newspapers that catered to the remnants of a Swedish

population that still lived in Finland. There was no way that I would ever learn Finnish, even though I made an effort to study it, so I relied on my Norwegian, which enabled me to read the Swedish newspaper, which I found to be quite balanced. Western Finland was still very close to the Swedes; they had bilingual signs. Depending on which locality you were visiting, the first line of the sign might be in Finnish; in other places, it might be in Swedish. You could choose either language for your university candidacy. I think over time, the Finnish language was used more and more. The week I left Finland, the Swedish royal family was visiting Finland and I attended the ceremonies that were held in western Finland. Relations were cordial. There were a lot of Finns working in Sweden, which at the time was much wealthier than its neighbor. I think the Finns knew that if “push came to shove,” they would once again be the frontline troops for the Swedes. The Finns knew that if the Soviets were ever to make a move in Europe, they would be among the first to be thrown into battle, which is the way it had been from time immemorial. The Finns were the ground forces defending northern Europe, whether in the Russian, the Czar’s or the Swedish army.

Q: How did the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 play in Helsinki?

RIDGWAY: I won’t speak for the Finnish government, but my impression was that knowledgeable Finns in the foreign policy area considered Jimmy Carter as naive from the outset; I don’t know that Brzezinski was viewed any more favorably. After Afghanistan had become the issue and following Carter’s speech about the misunderstanding with the Soviets, the Finns had taken measure of our administration. They had co-existed with the Soviets for a long time and knew them far better than we did; when the issue of the Afghan invasion came up in the UN, the Finns abstained.

I gave my final speech as U.S. ambassador to Finland to the Finnish equivalent of the Council of Foreign Relations. I sent my remarks to the presidential palace beforehand. The president read them and came and sat in the front row. I had developed a pattern for my speeches. I would speak in English, but periodically, my thoughts (not verbatim) were repeated in Finnish. My final message was that Finland had to be careful not to compromise its neutrality. We understood Finnish neutrality and we didn’t want anymore for Finland that it wanted for itself, which was a credible neutrality. I went on to say that it was not entirely clear to us that the position Finland had taken on Afghanistan was one that fit the image of credible neutrality, particularly given Finland’s own position. I am told that this speech remains one of the hallmark speeches in Finnish-U.S. relations and that it is still widely available in Finland. That was my final goodbye.

I returned a few years later as part of a Reagan entourage. I think I had something to do with President Reagan choosing to stop there. He gave a very important speech in Helsinki’s Finlandia Hall.

However, I have to go back a second to the Carter era and re-emphasize that the Finns could not believe Jimmy Carter. I loved Finland; I thought I had had a very good tour. I thought I made sure that the Finns understood that the U.S. was interested in them and understood the nuances of their policies. That is not to say that the Finns were right on everything and that I approved of all they did.

During the Christmas holidays of 1979, I got a phone call from Harry Barnes, who was then the Director General. He told me that Lucy Benson had resigned as Undersecretary for Security Assistance. Matt Nimetz, the Counselor of the Department, was going to replace her and the secretary wanted me to join his team as the Counselor of the Department. I think I suggested to Harry that I really wasn't ready to leave Finland, but he said that this was very important and he insisted that I return. He was right; the Counselor's job was very important and I agreed to take it.

I returned to Finland after Christmas to wrap things up. I gave the speech I described earlier and arrived back in Washington mid-February, 1980.

SAMUEL E. FRY, JR.
Deputy Chief of Mission
Helsinki (1977-1981)

Samuel E. Fry, Jr. was born in December 1934 and raised in Illinois, New York, and Massachusetts. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1956 and then attended the University of Edinburgh on a Dartmouth fellowship. While attending Edinburgh, Mr. Fry was drafted into the U.S. military. Upon completion of his military service, he received a master's degree from the University of Massachusetts. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961. Mr. Fry's career included positions in Moscow, Oslo, Helsinki, and Bucharest. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 26, 1993.

Q: That's great. Well now, let's move on to your next job. You were sort of continuing your northern focus here; you went to Helsinki from 1977 to 1981.

FRY: I mentioned that Rozanne Ridgway was a friend of mine and that we had served together in Norway. We stayed friends, not close personal friends, but good professional friends and we liked working with each other when we had the occasion. She had become Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Latin American Bureau and was negotiating all over the world on the new fisheries regulations and the extension of our economic zone. Many new treaties had to be negotiated. When she was appointed ambassador to Finland she called me and asked would I, since I was coming to the end of my time in Washington, be interested in being her Deputy Chief of Mission. I said, indeed I would. The first hurdle was that this was, if everybody's memory was correct then, and I think it was, the first time, since I was no longer married, that an unmarried female career ambassador would have an unmarried male career DCM. Strange things happen in the Foreign Service, but this kind of situation had never come about.

Believe it or not, there were those who said that would not work. I don't know what they had in mind, but the answer was that it did work very effectively. The other side of the problem was that the position was for a Class Two officer before the grade change occurred in the late '80s. It was a Class Two position and I was a Class Three officer.

Q: In military terms you were the equivalent to a colonel and this was probably a brigadier-general job.

FRY: Yes, that would be right. It would be the difference today of a Senior Foreign Service position instead of an FSO-1 position. So Rozanne said: "That will be my battle, you just do your job and start thinking about Finland." Well, it went to the panels and I was told that it would probably not happen and that I had misjudged Ambassador Ridgway's skills. In fact, it did happen and so she went to Finland in the summertime and I went after she got settled. I went in the fall and we were a team from the fall of 1977 until January of 1980, when she returned to become Counselor of the State Department.

I say with pride and without hesitation that, based on both the inspections we had there and several other things that happened in Finland and that were happening in the Foreign Service on how you manage posts, that this was one of the top three best managed posts world-wide for several years. The Foreign Service Institute made it a model for its DCM course and for its ambassadorial course. It was a case study in how you manage an embassy. The reason for that was not myself but the fact that Ambassador Ridgway saw very clearly what her role as ambassador was, and what the role should be of the manager of an embassy. It by no means meant that she didn't know what was going on or that she forfeited any of her responsibilities. Quite the contrary. She was splendid in laying out guidelines the way she wanted to see things run, and then you filled in all the blanks.

We were able to do this very effectively because she had great respect for the staff and the staff was more than dedicated to her, to the point of hurling on swords where necessary. The morale was extremely high. When we had our inspection, the inspectors sort of went away wondering what they should write, because things were working that well. I think it helped disabuse any nonsense that had remained about a single ambassador and a single DCM. I have never yet to this day, wondered whether they thought it would be a personal relationship, which of course it was not. I think it was just the old guard saying; "It's kind of strange, don't you think." The Finns loved it. She became the toast of the town as a most vivacious - it that's not socially incorrect - person, because she was. I mean she was a vivacious person, she was everywhere. She spread America thicker and with a greater intellectual content than any ambassador in modern times in that part of the world.

There have been a lot of political and career appointees to Finland, but they didn't have the depth that Rozanne had, and particularly on the Finnish debates about the Cold War and the Soviet Union. She would weigh in and tell them what she thought. Finns are a tough people to get to know. She gave them the sense of confidence that I was, indeed, as the Foreign Service regulations said, her alter ego and that what I was told would be accurately reported to her and to the State Department. So there was never any question when she was out of town, that her deputy spoke for her and for the State Department with her full support.

The Finns had, in 1979, expelled two Russians for activities incompatible with diplomatic status and there were a lot of people who thought, oh oh, we better balance this off now or the Russians will wonder why it is that we are leaning on them. Our Naval attaché did something relatively innocent, but it could be misconstrued. I had an opportunity to handle that. I certainly didn't want

the man expelled. I was called into the Foreign Ministry and asked what the Embassy planned to do. So I made a series of proposals to the State Department and said that I would like to go back to the Ministry as soon as possible. Ambassador Ridgway was in Washington and we were able to work something out. But the interesting thing was that there was never a second of hesitation on the Finnish part to treat her deputy exactly as they would have treated her, and believe me, her treatment was absolutely first grade. They considered her probably the strongest and most overall effective American ambassador in Finland since the Second World War.

There were some others they liked deeply, some very fine ambassadors. But at the time when they needed American reassurance about a number of things that were happening in the aftermath of the Vietnam war and great changes that were developing in the Soviet Union, they needed someone who really understood Finnish views, and would not take the position that Finland was just a stalking horse for the Soviet Union, which it never was. She was the person who more or less turned around the thinking in Washington on that and did a very fine job. Not that she was co-opted by the Finns in any way, but she made people see Finland for what it was, rather than what they thought it was, without being experts on Finnish affairs. In any case, the relationship worked out very, very well.

The fact about Finland was that we had very good bilateral relations and very few issues that were prickly or were insoluble. Almost everything could be worked out. The question with Finland, however, was that you never wanted to take it for granted. You wanted the Finns to know that they did play an important role in the world community. When you think about it, it was the Finns under UN mandate who were sending, long before many of the other countries were sending their soldiers -- and their soldiers were dying in peacekeeping efforts around the world. The UN Blue Beret was a badge of great distinction for the Finnish army, since the army itself had been curtailed in size by the treaty with Russia after the Second World War. The Finns had a highly trained professional corps, although they had conscription, because the army could never be more than 42,000 at any one time. They rotated everyone through the reserve, so the top officers were absolutely first rate.

They proved to be invaluable to the UN. Other Finns were in high positions in the Middle East negotiations and in other areas of international activity. We exchanged sensitive information with the Finns on a continuing basis and did it in a way that reflected on them as equal partners, you might say, in a lot of the international events that were taking place. Not to mention the Namibia war and the war in Biafra -- where for reasons which are too lengthy to explain in detail Finland was involved. The Biafran national anthem was the Finnish anthem "Finlandia." There were a lot of interesting things going on all the time with our Finnish relations.

Q: The African war was a great play thing of the benign left or something. In the United States for the glitterati, certainly in Sweden, and all the pop stars in London, and all this, I mean, it was an interesting time.

FRY: Yes. The war actually was pretty much over by that time, but the Scandinavians had both missionaries and shipments especially of fish to that area amongst other things. For decades before the long revolutionary wars in the Southwest Africa area, Finns had gone there as missionaries. The Finnish Lutheran church was very strong in Namibia. So the Finns had been

drawn in, you might say, by the fact that there were a lot of Finnish nationals around there. These were all peripheral things to the major world scene, but nevertheless there was always something that popped up that Finland was involved in. I might add one other thing that was a joy to work on in Finland. Although Finland did not participate for political reasons in the Marshall Plan, it was a country renowned for having paid back its debts. They were debts incurred with the United States after the First World War, and they were paid back on a regular basis. The Finns used to shudder at toasts when someone said, "All Americans know that gallant Finland fought the Russians in the Winter War," "that Paavo Nurmi was the great Olympic flying Finn," and "they pay their debts on time." These were all true, but tiring to hear repeated. Then Finland made an offer in 1975 which was that, if America agreed, the last three payments of the debt would be put in escrow, if the US would match them for a pool to allow a fund to develop for the Fulbright exchange program.

Thousands of Finns had participated in the many levels of the Fulbright exchange program. But, both countries were having, or at least the United States was having occasionally, funding problems. The Finnish idea was that in addition to what both countries could put into the Fulbright program, could there not be seed money that, if invested wisely, would provide a pool which would in times to come even reach perhaps the point where it could be independent of the largess of each country. That occurred, and the money sat for several years while people figured out how to invest it. It grew to something in the range of \$700,000 but the stricture was that there had to be an inflation edge taken from the interest, and that only the interest could be used for the grants. It wasn't all that much money when you look at the cost of paying a full exchange professor for one year. As the program developed it was decided that the Deputy Chief of Mission would represent the United States on the investment panel along with a representative from the United States Information Agency and two people from the Finnish side.

I sat on the first board. It was great fun, since it was not my money kind of thing, beginning to figure how we could invest this tax free fund, and build up a pool where we could start using it. What we did as a test case, since there was some money in the pot already, was to establish an American professorial chair at the University of Helsinki in 1977, the 50th anniversary of Finnish independence. An American delegation to this celebration was headed by Joan Mondale, the wife of Vice President Mondale. The bombshell announcement was made about the Chair in international relations and international history. The first participant was a true academic superstar both before and since, John Gadis, who still is the foremost authority on the origins and activities of the Cold War. He was the perfect choice. He was also greatly respected in Eastern Europe.

Q: A pre eminent historian, to be sure.

FRY: That's right and, as I say, respected on both sides. Through this fund, which the Finns had originated, he became the first occupant of that Fulbright chair. For the 4 years I was in Finland I sat on that panel. It was very interesting to see it develop. I had occasion in 1980 while Ambassador Ridgway was preparing to leave, to take home leave. I met with Senator Fulbright, who was by that time out of the Senate, and I gave him a briefing on where the program stood. He had heard about this, of course, and it was very heart-warming to see his reaction. If you think that Senator Fulbright was not proud of the Fulbright program, I can tell you this was the

thing that he knew he would be remembered for long after the time that he had been a senator and for his role in opposition to the Vietnam war. By 1981, when I left Finland, the mutual exchange of people under all aspects of the Fulbright program had reached 3,000. It was, for the size of the country, by far the largest in the world, and gave the lie to these facts that Finland in the end was sort of under the Soviet orbit.

This was the kind of program that Finland could have because the Soviet Union didn't have a similar one. In addition, there were thousands of Finnish high school students who were going for their junior year abroad in the United States. I made it a part of my job to speak to every group that I could before they went to the United States for their year. There was the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, or church exchanges, the Lutheran Church particularly since Finland is Lutheran, Youth for Understanding, American Field Service and so on, all these youth exchanges. We were very strong in supporting that in the embassy. The reverse was that not many American kids studied in Finland because of the almost insurmountable language barrier. Of course, most Finnish children were almost fluent in English, I mean that's the way they operate in that country in foreign languages. Whatever was said about Finlandization, or the idea that somehow the Finns were playing their cards close to their chest in dealing with the Soviet Union, perhaps more closely than they had to, the reality was that Finland was totally western-oriented; a market economy. Those of us who worked there wanted to use that orientation the best way we could. The Fulbright Program was an absolutely outstanding example.

Q: How did you find the Soviet influence? I mean we're still talking about this was not a good period. The Soviets had gone into Afghanistan, Carter had come with big ideas, he ended up firmly anti-Soviet after what happened in Afghanistan and relations were bad. Finland had the reputation of having to be very careful about how it dealt with the Soviet Union.

FRY: Indeed. Finland had a Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union that was extended while I was there. That treaty required Finland to use all its resources to repel any invasion intended for the Soviet Union by way of Finnish territory. That was always misinterpreted in the West, that Finland would fight along side the Soviet Union which, of course, was not what the treaty said. After fifty wars with the Russians over the centuries, and with the brutality of the Winter War in 1940, and then the war from 1941 to 1944 the Finns realized that they could never fight the Soviet Union again. By the same token, they declared their neutrality in the sense that they said that Finnish territory could not be violated by anyone for any purpose. They never said a specific country. But what the Soviets had written into the pact was if Finnish territory is violated by Germany or any nation aligned with Germany, since the Soviet paranoia was always Germany, the Finns would do such and such. The Finns themselves, although it was in the treaty, never used those terms, but they had this burden of defending the idea that Finnish territory could not be used and this led to all sorts of angels on the head of a pin. I mean that Finland could not be violated by anyone.

What people tend to forget was that the Finnish handling of the Russians was masterful in two ways. From the Russian viewpoint, if you started on the Norwegian border, since Finland has no border on the Arctic Ocean anymore, and went all the way around to Alaska, with the sole exception of Finland, most every country was hostile to the Soviet Union or was in some way a member with the United States in NATO or with SEATO or whatever it was, perhaps India and

Iran excepted. We have our troops in South Korea. In other words the containment policy had worked beyond our wildest dreams with the exception of Finland. This gave the Finns and Russians an opportunity to say, ad nauseam, that this is an example of two countries with very different political systems, working in harmony and friendship, and so on and so forth, so you wanted to have a lot of wine to get through the dinner. That was the truth.

The other thing was that Finland has few natural resources and certainly no resources for producing energy. They don't have any waterfalls, any oil, they don't have any coal. So all of their resources for a modern industrial state, which is what Finland certainly is, had to come either from the world price of oil being shipped in or natural gas and oil from the Soviet Union. The deal they worked out with the Soviet Union, which was in full bloom all the time that I was there, was that they would denominate the oil and gas at world prices, or perhaps at a discount, and Finland would supply the Soviet Union with an equal amount of material or equipment or engines or build hotels or help in Russian pulp mills or build railways or whatever it was. Well, this was great for Finland because it kept their assembly lines running at full capacity. When they got non-Russian orders that was even better, because then they got the hard currency. For Finland, almost all energy supplies could be achieved without the expenditure of hard currencies.

What other country was in that position? The Russians benefited from the skilled labor and the very high quality of Finnish - excellent quality just superb - equipment. Finns did not get engaged in weaponry other than shotguns or things like that, but they did a lot in construction. That was so good from the Finnish point of view that of course a lot of Finns said; "Maybe some day the Cold War will end and we'll have to pay for all this energy from the Soviet Union in dollars, and that's going to change the picture a lot." That's what has happened in the 1990s although there are still exchanges under construction contracts and all that. That relationship with the Soviet Union was handled beautifully by the Finns. There was even in their arrangement a deal where if the imbalance - if the Finns imported so much oil and hadn't built factories - that at a certain clearinghouse point they would pay hard currency. But the Finns always got the contracts. They'd really hustled through the Soviet Union, talked to plant managers, "what you need to improve your plan is this and that." So there wasn't, in fact, any exchange of hard currency. That's just one example of the things that were going on. The Finns had some MiGs and they had western airplanes.

They had two 440 megawatt nuclear plants that were built by the Russians, but two 660 megawatt plants built by the Swedes. The Russians wouldn't build containment shelters. So US Westinghouse built the containment shelters for the Russian plants and everyone called the plants Eastinghouse, since it was part Russian and part western technology. This is the balancing act they did all the way down the line and it worked very well for them. At no time was there ever a truly serious word on the Russian side that they were dissatisfied. There was one time with Khrushchev, I can't recall the story exactly, when Finland had done something or a Finnish politician had said something. "Well maybe we need consultations under the pact", said the Russians, which was always the scare word for the Finns. The Finns went down to Moscow and said; "those days are over, those days are over, we don't need that kind of behavior from you because we both know what our relationship is and we are carrying it out to the letter". Whatever the Soviets were talking about was dropped right away. There was never during my time, or

immediately before and certainly since, anything that would resemble a crisis between Finland and the Soviet Union, or today's Russia.

Q: How did the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the coup there, play in Finland? I would have thought that this would have had - I mean here was a neutral country, although of a completely different nature than Finland, but where the Soviets didn't like the government, and just came in and tried to change it.

FRY: It made the Finns very, very uncomfortable. From the day the Soviet invasion started either the ambassador or myself were briefing the top people in the Foreign Ministry on a weekly basis about what the Russians were doing. That slowly died out because nobody expected the war to go on that long. Then President Carter canceled US participation in the Olympics. The Finns disagreed with us entirely, because Finland is, if nothing else, an Olympic country. As a small country it has won medals way out of proportion to its size and human base. So Finland refused to go with that and said; "why" openly "we don't think this is the right thing to do." There were various issues in the UN on voting where they were strained, they stretched their limits, but in general if they could abstain or avoid a position which put them either on one side or the other of the super powers, they did so. This met their criteria for behavior which was; Finland is a neutral country that neither favors nor disavows either one of the super powers. It was a dicey time for their diplomats, and in their heart of hearts they thought the Soviet Union was crazy, they thought communism was wrong, but they couldn't say that. But I'll tell you an interesting adventure when the hostage crisis was going on in Iran...

Q: ...when the Americans were taken hostage by fundamentalists Islamic forces.

FRY: That's right. There were two cases early on where Americans who had escaped the take-over of the compound, found refuge with Finns, were eventually delivered to the Finnish military attaché and were smuggled out of Iran. We said that we wanted to tell the world, and the Finns said; "I beg you quietly. In the diplomatic channels will be fine please." It was only after it was all over that the fact that the Finns had performed these acts was brought out. The Finns were not willing to be a patsy for either super power, and for a lot of good reasons: for treaty obligations down to emotional reasons. They played their cards the way they thought best for Finland. What else can a small country do when you have 4,800,000 people next to the Soviet Union, and you have a treaty of mutual security, you have to be pretty careful in choosing your words.

Q: Did you have a problem in explaining Finland's position, particularly to American politicians who tried to see things in black and white?

FRY: Yes we did. Finlandization, which was a German term, was quite the rage at that time. It was looked upon by Finland as a very negative thing, since it put them as a patsy of the Soviet Union. The Finns made an abortive effort to put a positive spin on it, which was that if Finlandization is what we say it is it's too bad other countries can't do it. That is hard to sell since the Finnish situation was unique. It was the only country in the entire world periphery of the Soviet Union that the Soviets could look at without feeling that there was some kind of hostile pressure there, and indeed there was not. So, yes that was a period where they just had to tough it out you might say. They just had to say, and they were always very polite about it and there was

always a civil argument, "Well, then perhaps you don't understand fully our history, our conditions, our relationships," and so on.

We at the embassy were criticized on occasion for perhaps presenting the Finnish position maybe too clearly. Then it looked like you had gone to too many Finnish saunas. I might interject, but long since I mentioned about going to Finland with a woman ambassador, one of the other things that concerned people when Rozanne Ridgway went was that she couldn't sauna with the President of Finland or the Foreign Minister. She would miss these sauna confidences. This turned out to be utter and complete nonsense, of course. The interesting part was that when she saunaeed with their wives she learned a hell of a lot more from them about what was going on in Finland than she ever would have if she had been behind a wall talking with the men. In any case, if there was any slack to be taken up, which there really wasn't, it would have certainly been taken up by others in the embassy.

The time came when President Urho Kekkonen, who'd been in power for 25 years, was nearly at the end of his reign because he had, as we would probably designate it now, Alzheimers disease. Whatever it was, he was losing his memory. We had prepared in advance, starting with Ambassador Ridgway and working through Ambassador Goodby, a whole series of scenarios. We had done airgrams on every conceivable Finn, how they stood with us, what would be the likely course of Finnish politics if they came in, in other words a really first-class job. So when and if the time came he had a heart attack, we wouldn't be running around saying; "Are they going to go pro-Soviet now? Well, the last public sighting of President Urho Kekkonen was on the fourth of July in 1981 at the American Embassy. It was the first time he had gone in many years. He told his staff; "I want to go to the American Embassy." We always asked him, of course, but he hadn't come in a number of years. He said; "I want to go to this one." Kekkonen was removed from office in August but everything was in place for an analysis on our side of who the next President might be. We had already sent in that information. The embassy's position was; ""We want to know what's in it for the United States."

The President who was chosen was an American dream. Mauno Koivisto had been head of the Bank of Finland and a personal friend of the embassy for years. We couldn't have had a better relationship with him and suddenly he became the President of Finland. He was a man who never talked about the war, and yet was a pathfinder who used to go over on the Soviet side and slit throats. So the Soviets knew all about Mauno Koivisto. He was the perfect example of Finnish politicians. He had supported the Finnish position on relations with the Soviet Union, he had been a masterful central banker, and yet he was a friend of the United States, if you want to put it in our personal terms, and that worked out beautifully and ended any problem of the Kekkonen demise. Finland had to do some punching on Finlandization here and there, but it wasn't, in the end, a real problem.

Q: You mentioned Ambassador James Goodby, who was essentially a nuclear arms control and disarmament genius, how did he fit in there?

FRY: Ambassador Goodby was the intellectual equal in every way of Ambassador Ridgway. I'm not trying to compare them. Their personalities were quite different. He was brilliant, an accomplished author and was precisely the kind of ambassador that the Finns more than

appreciated the United States sending. Here was a heavyweight of heavyweights on everything to do with disarmament and nuclear affairs, the kind of thing that the Finns were endlessly involved in at the UN, and in their own society He was asked to speak publicly from the first day. He had many prestigious opportunities to put the American view forward in a quiet way. He knocked down into small pieces the Soviet idea of a Nordic nuclear-free zone. He showed in a very civil and brilliant way, the value of such a policy coming from a country that had the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world fifty miles from the Finnish border in the Kola Peninsula. Jim Goodby was the ideal ambassador for that time and also because a lot of people began to sense that the Soviet Union was in turmoil. Not on the surface, but things had been stretched so far to paper over grave problems. With his long involvement with NATO, Goodby was able to give excellent scenarios, both public and private, to the Finns about NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Just the right ambassador at the right time.

JAMES E. GOODBY
Ambassador
Finland (1980-1981)

Ambassador James E. Goodby was born in Providence, Rhode Island on December 20, 1929. He received a bachelor's degree in geology from Harvard University and served in the U.S. Army. He served in Brussels and was ambassador to Finland. He also worked for the Atomic Energy Commission, the U.S. Disarmament Commission, the Policy Planning Council, the U.S. Mission to the European Community, the European Bureau, the Political/Military Bureau, European Affairs, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the Conference on Disarmament in Europe. Ambassador Goodby was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 10, 1990.

Q: And we're also talking about, really, incursions into Africa--Ethiopia, Angola...

GOODBY: We're talking about incursions into Africa, the whole business--Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Ethiopia. And then we saw this culminating, of course, with the invasion of Afghanistan.

Of course, that really gave people a field day, you know, who felt that we'd been neglecting our strategic forces. And, of course, Reagan was able to campaign on that. He finally did become the presidential nominee and won the election. And part of it was that we had allowed the Soviets to gain this margin of superiority, which permitted them to do things like go into Afghanistan, and we had to correct this. And, of course, that led to the mandate, as Reagan saw it and the Congress saw it, for this tremendous build-up, the biggest in peacetime history, that took place in his administration.

I learned finally, I think it was in February or March of 1980, that the president had decided to nominate me for ambassador to Finland. I guess it was in February, probably, which was record time, since I first heard of it in December. I was confirmed by the Senate and went to Finland in

March of 1980 and presented my credentials in April of 1980 to President Urho Kekkonen, who was the grand old man of Finnish politics, having been president for almost a quarter of a century at that time.

History books will tell you all about Kekkonen and all that, so I won't dwell on that, but, needless to say, it was not a particularly pleasant time to go to Finland, for a variety of reasons. The main reason, of course, was the Afghan War.

The Finns had always been painstakingly neutral between the Soviet Union and the United States. During the Vietnam War, for example, whereas the Swedes criticized us vigorously for our participation in Vietnam, the Finns never did. By the same token, when the Soviets went into Afghanistan, the Soviets didn't criticize them either. And they made it quite clear they were going to go to the Olympics and they were not going to embargo anything. So it was clear before I went that Finland and the United States had very different ideas about the seriousness and the meaning and how we should react to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. And so it was not a normal time. In a normal time during the Cold War we would have had some problems, but we wouldn't have had this really quite sharp difference about how to react to a certain situation.

Furthermore, Finland can be a pretty interesting place to talk to Soviets, who, at the time I was there and before, were a quite heavy presence there. But I was under instructions not to talk to the Soviet Embassy at all.

Q: Oh, yes, I remember that period.

GOODBY: That's right, because of the invasion of Afghanistan. So part of the job, which would have been mainly some kind of liaison with the Soviets and getting their views about things and providing some reports to Washington, was not there because of this. So it was a little more complicated than things normally might have been.

In presenting my credentials to the president, he mentioned something about Afghanistan. And so I took it upon myself to give him some unvarnished views about what the Soviets had done--not the normal kind of conversation for that kind of ceremony, and perhaps I was not wise in doing that. He said, well, he didn't want to get into an argument about that, and so we ended the conversation. But that was my first kind of official business, to complain about the Soviets to the president of Finland, who didn't see it that way at all.

Q: The Finns, having once been part of the Soviet Union, went to great lengths to get out of it.

GOODBY: Having once been part of the Russian empire.

Q: The Russian empire, yes. There must have been a certain amount of feeling, you know, if the Soviets are ready to jump into Afghanistan, they'd sure be ready to jump into us again if we took a different turn. I mean, I would think this would be sort of a sub rosa feeling there.

GOODBY: Well, Kekkonen felt, and a lot of the officials in Finland felt, that they had a working relationship with the top officials in Moscow, including Brezhnev and everybody else, that

would permit them to escape. They put a lot of store on this personal relationship, and the Soviets do, too. I mean, they did value Kekkonen because they knew him. And then there were a couple of crises, long before I got there, in which the Soviets had pretty much said, "Okay, Kekkonen is our guy and we'll do whatever you want." I mean, that's putting it a little bluntly, but it was that kind of a relationship, and they were depending pretty heavily on that.

Now it also turns out that Finland is a fairly conservative place, probably more so than the other Scandinavian countries are, and that, when you're talking about the man in the street or the business leaders or people in education, you don't have this kind of thing we were talking about earlier that you do find in Germany, there's not this sense of moral neutralism between the United States and the Soviet Union. I mean, they know the Soviet Union for what it is. They don't like it; they have to do business with it.

The telling thing there is, of course, that about ninety-nine percent of the people there learn English, and hardly anybody bothers to learn Russian except those who have to do business with the Russians. And then the other telling story is that these student exchange programs are far and away more vigorous in Finland per capita than anywhere else in the world, and they come to the United States. And there's a tremendously supportive, very pro-US atmosphere in Finland.

But the official stance was not to criticize the Soviets. And the thing that bothered me more about Finland, I guess, than anything else at that time was a kind of self-censorship in the press, so that the press didn't want to say anything critical about the Soviets either. And that's only now beginning to ease up. But, at that time and for a long time before I got there, the press just felt that it was not in Finland's interests for them to say anything critical about Moscow. And I found that kind of self-censorship more troubling than a foreign policy that catered to the Soviets. That I could understand, given their position. And I guess I could intellectually understand self-censorship, but I had real problem with the way it was handled there.

In any case, to make a long story short, I was in Finland only for about eighteen months. I went during the last year of the Carter administration. In April, not long after I presented my credentials, we had the famous botched operation to rescue our hostages in Tehran. And, when I heard that, I said to myself, "Well, that's it. Carter's not going to get reelected." And I realized, from that moment on if I hadn't before, that I was going to be faced with a change in administrations, and I suspected, things being what they are, given my previous experience, that I would probably be out. And Carter did lose the election.

I went back to Washington early in the new year and asked to be allowed to stay and said why I thought I should be. And I was assured at that time that Secretary of State Haig had agreed with that and thought that I'd only been there less than a year at that point and that I was doing a good job and should stay.

What Haig did not know was that, in that campaign against Frank Church for senator from Idaho, Reagan had promised the new senator, Symms, who had defeated Church, that as a reward he would let the senator designate an ambassador if he were elected. And the embassy that they let Symms designate was Finland. The reason for that was that there was a man in Idaho who had been a Mormon missionary in Finland just after World War II, had married a Finnish woman,

and had a ranch called the Finlandia Ranch. And he badly wanted to go to Finland as ambassador, and apparently he had helped out...

Q: Was this Mark Austad?

GOODBY: No, Mark Austad was there before Sam Ridgeway. This was a man named Nyborg, I think it was.

In any case, there was this deal between Reagan and the senator-elect from Idaho to give them Finland. The State Department didn't know that. I got back, feeling pretty good, told people I'd been told I was going to stay on. And, about a month or so after that, I got a telegram from the director general of the Foreign Service, saying, "I regret very much to inform you..." that the president had decided otherwise. So I kind of kept it quiet. And, finally, of course, it came out in July, and I did stay until August of 1981. I was there about as long under Reagan as I was under Carter, as it turned out.

I knew before I left that I was going to become the deputy head of the strategic arms talks delegation, so I knew I was going to a fairly interesting job. But I did, very frankly, regret that I worked like a dog, and my wife did, too, to make a go of it as ambassador and develop the contacts you have to go. And, again, one of these wasted things.

Q: Because in eighteen months you really... It takes a long time to penetrate, particularly a conservative society like that.

GOODBY: It takes a long time, that's right, and I had gotten to the point where I really did know people. I knew the political scene. I was, if I do say so myself, a pretty effective ambassador, and then I was pulled out.

My relationship with the president of Finland, Mr. Kekkonen, actually became rather good. And, unprecedentedly, he came to visit me in my office in my embassy when I was leaving, and then went to my reception that I was giving at a garden there in August. It was his last official public act, because a day or two after that he went to Iceland on a state visit, and just about as soon as he got there he suffered a stroke and never again...

Q: How old was he?

GOODBY: He was eighty-one. He came back to Finland and was totally incapacitated, so that visit to the American Embassy in Finland was the last official thing he did in Finland before left office.

I don't want to skip over my year and half, because it was tremendously interesting and a period I look back on with great pleasure and with regret it ended so soon.

I spent a lot my time on public affairs, because I discovered that the American presence in Finland was not in the form of business or anything else, but that it wasn't much there. We never had visitors; there weren't any American businessmen; there's no American community. The

thing that made an impact was American popular culture--a lot of movies--and, other than that, practically nothing aside from these student exchanges.

So I made it a point to visit practically every town and city in Finland in the year and a half I was there. And I did that. I had a regular routine worked out: I would go off on a trip and I would try to go to about three cities in about three days, and I would meet with the city council and the mayor, and if there was a Communist Party, I would meet with the Communist Party.

I was, I think, the first ambassador, by the way, to meet with the head of the Communist Party there. He couldn't believe it--asked for my card.

And we, I think, established a pretty effective American presence in that way. I'd go off, I'd give a talk, I'd visit a university if there was one, visit factories. I acted like a politician, in other words. And it did work out; it worked out very well.

Also, because of my background in arms control, I had a pretty good dialogue with the government on those subjects. And I was instrumental in helping them to be relieved of the fear that because we were deploying these cruise missiles in Germany, that we were going to be violating their neutrality. That became quite a popular issue at one point, and I worked with the government in Washington to help us make a statement on that subject.

I thought we also needed to work out a more formal network of linkages with Finland, and so I succeeded in negotiating a whole string of agreements, on things not very important, but I was following the Henry Kissinger principle of trying to develop a network of agreements. And we had agreements on science and business and travel and everything under the sun.

I spent a lot of my time writing letters to people in the United States asking them to come to Finland, it being a time when we weren't visiting Moscow. You know, normally you'd get a lot of people going to Finland on their way to Moscow, but nobody was going to Moscow, so we didn't have people coming. And I succeeded in getting people that wouldn't otherwise come, but came because I asked them to. And we had a pretty good string of visitors, but nothing like what it would be under normal circumstances.

And I got a few cultural events to come to Finland. And gave a lot of interviews to the press about everything under the sun, from economics, which I didn't know much about, to arms control, which I did.

And made, if I can put it immodestly, quite a splash in the eighteen months I that was there. People looking back now, Finns in particular, think I must have been there a lot longer, because I really worked a lot harder in the job probably than most people would. And my wife did as well. Both of us thoroughly enjoyed it. Established good Finnish contacts we have to this day.

But that was a side of the story that isn't particularly historical in point of view.

Q: But it does give a feel for what an ambassador does under difficult circumstances.

GOODBY: I did develop some good working relationships, by the way, with some of the politicians and also with some of the key government officials. Kekkonen, being the age he was and the physical condition he was in, was probably not running the government in a direct sense any more than Brezhnev was in Moscow. So the people one had to get to know were people that were close to him. And I did get to know them quite well and, I think, got across the American point of view pretty effectively on these things.

Q: Was the Reagan election sort of a shocker to the Finns?

GOODBY: No. I'll never forget, it kind of offended me, but there was quite a famous cartoonist in Finland called Kari, who drew cartoons for the leading Finnish newspaper there called the *Helsingin Sanomat*, which has a tremendous circulation, serving about the whole population of Finland, practically. And, after Reagan defeated Carter, he had a cartoon that appeared, almost the day after, showing Reagan coming by to pick up Carter to go to the inauguration. Reagan was dressed in formal clothes and top hat, and it showed Carter dressed as a clown.

I resented it, frankly, but what it did show was that there was a significant body of opinion there that felt that Carter was just not a serious person as a statesman. I think that's the impression he made there and in a lot of other places in Europe, regrettably, because he was a good man in many respects, as is seen by the things he's done afterwards.

But that was the impression I had, you know, they were kind of relieved that Reagan came in. And the view they took, and the view I frankly had too, was that, well, a lot of people come into office saying one thing, and then become more moderate as they get in there. Well, it became apparent that Reagan wasn't going to become more moderate. And his relationship with the Soviets, of course, was the thing they were looking at mainly. Their worries began to grow after he came in, but the initial feeling was one of relief: Why, here's a serious guy in getting rid of this clown. That's the way they thought of Carter. Sad.

ROCKWELL A. SCHNABEL
Ambassador
Finland (1986-1989)

Rockwell A. Schnabel was born in the Netherlands and came to the United States in 1957, becoming a citizen in 1962. After working in investment banking and joining the organizing committee for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, he joined the State Department in 1985 as a consultant. He then continued on to serve as Ambassador to Finland. Schnabel was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

SCHNABEL: So I joined then, officially, I guess, the State Department in 1985, sort of middle '85, as a consultant. You know, you go through that sort of a training period. And was confirmed at the end of '85 and went, the beginning of '86, to Finland. Stayed there for three years.

Had gotten to know Mr. Bush as a vice president because of his involvement with Finland. He was a good friend of the president of Finland. And, because of that, I had gotten to know him, strictly on business matters relating to bilateral issues. And, of course, I was very interested in his potential presidency, and had gotten somewhat involved through his campaign people--to the extent that I was legally able to do that, of course--and joined several organizations that were supportive of the Bush presidency. And then basically got to know some of the players in the Bush administration. One of them being the secretary of commerce, who is in place here today. And he invited me to come in and join him in this department. So that's kind of the long and the short of it.

Q: Well, now, first, what particularly attracted you? You say you had several offers to Finland.

SCHNABEL: Well, the logical thing, I guess, in my case, would have been to go to The Netherlands, because I had a background there, and a language capability, and some knowledge of the country. However, at that time Secretary Shultz felt that maybe I was too close to that country to be sent there.

Q: I think this really, throughout the two centuries, has not proved to be a particularly fruitful thing, sending somebody back to the country... We've done this for two hundred years, and as a sort of a diplomatic historian, it hasn't worked out too well.

SCHNABEL: Well, it could well be that because of that he felt very strongly that that was not a reason to be going there. And I accepted that, of course.

Well, subsequent to that, I asked if I could be considered for a Nordic country ambassadorship, and Finland then came up. I studied Finland even before I accepted the job, frankly, because I wanted to know something about it. Then my wife and I decided to go, and it turned out that Finland, of course, because of the timing, was very, very interesting.

Q: Yes, because of the East-West dialogue that was being focused on Finland.

SCHNABEL: The first meeting, at the 10th anniversary of the CSCE conference, the Helsinki Conference, I think it was 1984, wasn't it, or am I mixing that up?

Q: I'm not sure of the exact date.

SCHNABEL: In any event, George Shultz came to Finland, and I believe that that was the reason he came to Finland, because of that 10th anniversary. That was the first time that he met Shevardnadze, which was right in the U.S. Embassy, of course. And subsequent to that, George Shultz came to Helsinki, oh, seven or eight different times while I was there, on his way to Moscow. And subsequent to those visits, of course, President Reagan came, on his way to Moscow, and spent three or four days in Helsinki.

So the feeling was that the wealth of knowledge that the Finns had about the Soviets, because of their very special relationship, was useful to the American side, and it was also a good stopping

off point and a good place to, in effect, gather the forces and get prepared for these meetings. Be it at the Foreign Ministry level or at the...

Q: Presidential.

SCHNABEL: Right, now presidential level. So we had a great deal of exposure to it. And historically I think it's very interesting what happened, literally from 1985 to today, between the Soviet Union and the United States, when that was really kind of the beginning, I guess, of the thawing out and the original meeting between George Shultz and Shevardnadze was there in '84, as I mentioned.

So it turned out to be a very interesting post because of that. It also turned out to be very interesting because of the way the Finns are in general. I think they're very good friends and supporters of the United States.

They have a very unique position in where they are located, of course, with a very long border with the Soviets. They have fought the Soviets and the Russians many, many, many times, and of course were under Swedish rule for seven or eight hundred years, and then were really under some control of the Czarist regime in the 19th Century. And then really because they put up a tremendous battle during the Second World War with the Soviets, that was something that Stalin, in particular, respected. I think that that had a good deal to do with the fact that the country of Finland remained independent as a neutral country, even though, of course, they have a very close security agreement with the Soviets.

Q: Well, before we get to your actual work in Finland, I wonder if you could just give me an idea of your impression about the preparation that you had, not only for Finland, but to be an ambassador and all this.

SCHNABEL: Okay. I took about, I would say, off and on, six months, which was also the period it took to go through all the hearing processes and all that sort of thing, and the confirmation hearings and so on. I think that the preparation was, in general, good. I think a great deal had to do with your own initiative. I think there wasn't necessarily at that time a school that one went through, if you will, even though we did have a week thing that was run by the present ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

Q: Shirley Temple Black.

SCHNABEL: Shirley Temple, who did a great job. And it sort of acquainted people with some of the processes. But I think, in general, to get into the job, a great deal had to do with your relationship with the desk officer, frankly, who sort of steered you through the process of getting to know people. A lot of it is self-study, I think. And I believe that those people that are politicals, that weren't brought up with the background and the experience, that they are expected to be of a clear mind and are expected to recognize what is needed to get the job done. And therefore, when you arrive, you are supposed to go out there and learn whatever there is to be learned. So the briefing process, even though I felt was not necessarily terribly well organized,

but it was very available though. So it was really up to yourself, together with the desk officer and, of course, the head of the bureau, to get organized and to learn about the job.

Q: Did you have any preconceptions? Because in some of these interviews I've had, people who have been political appointees have come with a certain antipathy towards, you might say, the process, the Foreign Service, or even government. And others understand what it's all about and get in. Did you have any feeling about this when you came in?

SCHNABEL: No, I found that there was a good deal of cooperation in the State Department that most everybody was very available and very willing and anxious to help. No, I never found, even when I was at post... That doesn't mean that there aren't moments of frustration, of course. I have them today, too, because the process is an incredibly complex process. But I did not have a problem with the bureaucracy, and I found the people to be very helpful, very knowledgeable, and whenever you had a question, the question would be answered.

But, again, if I had to say anything, there isn't, or wasn't at that time, a formal process through which people were taken, other than the Shirley Temple Black course.

Q: Which is the week course.

SCHNABEL: The week course, which was certainly helpful. But, beyond that, a good deal was left up to your own devices.

Q: When you went out, did you have any particular sort of instructions: Now we want the Finns to do this, or You're to do this, or did you just sort of go out with a fairly...?

SCHNABEL: I had fairly clear instructions from the secretary of state. And of course when we arrived, I think it was 90 days that you put together a country plan. I don't even recall its official name for it.

Q: I think it is a country plan.

SCHNABEL: I think it is, yes, that you are supposed to put together so you could come back to the secretary and say this is what I see and this is what I think needs to be done. Yes, I think that I had a relatively good understanding of the American foreign policy in general, and I had a relatively good understanding of the foreign policy toward Finland, what it was that we were attempting to do and try to accomplish. And once I got in place, we adjusted certain things and maybe set some goals for ourselves that were then cleared with the State Department. And that way we arrived at the yearly plans. But I had a fair understanding of what it was that we were looking for.

Q: Well, obviously this is an unclassified interview, and certainly in the case of Finland I don't think this is a particular problem, but what were after? I mean, when you went out there, what did you feel that should be done with Finland as far as relations between Finland and the United States?

SCHNABEL: Well, we were very aware of the neutrality issue, of course, of Finland. We were very aware of the importance of Finland to the Soviet Union, and their accessibility and their special relationship. So we felt there was a good deal of information to be obtained being in Finland, that we had very good contacts with the Finns. I mean, we had a very good dialogue. I think that we were interested in exploring if you have a neutral country, that that country could be leaning one way or another. And we felt that maybe that neutral country had in the past been leaning, officially in any case, to the East. And maybe one of our thoughts was if there was a way to get them to lean a little bit more toward the West that that would be a viable goal. And I actually believe that the timing was such that that in effect happened. I mean, history was there; the time was appropriate for that. And I also think that we were concerned about Finland as a potential throughput place, if that's the right word, a place where American, particularly Western, technology could be put through to the Soviet Union, again because of their very special relationship. So we had a concern about that, because they were dealing, as a neutral country, with the West. And of course, as a neutral country, they were dealing to a large extent with the Soviet Union. We were very concerned about the possibility about technology transfer leakage.

Q: In other words, at the time there would be leakage. In other words, things--either knowledge or equipment--that we didn't want the Soviets to have.

SCHNABEL: Right. We were concerned about that, like we would have been with any neutral country of course, but because of the special relationship Finland had, we were probably slightly more concerned.

One of the first meetings I had in Finland after I arrived, as a matter of fact, was with the head of a company that was building a certain piece of equipment that we felt would very definitely come under the controlled group of products. And we were very concerned to have that technology go to the Soviet side.

As it turned out, we spent two years or so on putting together an agreement with Finland which gave Finland the Five K privileges. Which in effect gave them the same privileges, if you will, and understandings, that we have with our Co-Com partners. So, in effect, in 1988, I believe it was, we signed an agreement with Finland, which was an agreement where Finland agreed to apply the same sort of controls over technology that the Co-Com countries had.

Q: Co-Com countries being the...

SCHNABEL: The Co-Com countries were our allies basically in Western Europe, and also Canada and Japan. But they were part of an agreement, the Paris Agreement, that in effect states that there won't be a transfer of technology to the East of a certain controlled list. Now at the moment we're going through the process of decontrolling many of these items, as you know.

Q: Yes, I know.

SCHNABEL: And there's been a lot of talk about it.

Q: But it's a different world.

SCHNABEL: Yes, exactly. But the Finns, though, interestingly enough, saw fairly early on in the process, even though at that time we weren't really, things were changing of course already in 1987 and '86, but they saw, apparently, very good reason that they should be allied with the West in this area of technology, because if they were not, that they would lose out and become terribly isolated. Because technology, of course, was in the West and not in the East, to a large extent.

Q: Did you find your long experience as an investment banker, which was certainly involved in this, gave you certain skills, particularly in dealing with what amounts to a commercial set of agreements?

SCHNABEL: Yes, I felt it did. I felt it did. I was very keen. And I suppose if you had to ask me what was the most important thing that was accomplished while I was in Finland, it was that agreement. And I felt that because of my ability to deal with, to negotiate with, heads of companies, but also with the financial people and the technical people, that that helped a great deal. I made it a point in Finland to become very close fairly quickly to the business community. And I think the Finns would acknowledge that as something that probably in the past had not been quite at the same level, because we had different people, obviously, with different interests prior to that. Very, very good people but with different interests. And I think that it helped in the negotiation of the agreement.

Conversely, there were many people involved in that agreement, including in the State Department itself, of course, and in the Pentagon, that were very instrumental. And I think it was a good agreement for both countries. I think the Finns were very strict in administering the agreement. There was a case, as a matter of fact, where somebody broke some of the rules, the regulations, and that person ended up in jail. They made a very important point of that. And as a matter of fact I've heard it said here in town that that particular agreement was the forerunner of other agreements similar to that with other neutral countries. Now because of the total change in the world today, that agreement is of less importance than it was then at that time, of course. But it certainly helped the business climate between Finland, which is a small country, of course, and the United States a great deal. And we had the military and we had the State Department people come out to Finland, and I think there have been some bonds built because of that. Also from a business standpoint. And the Finns have become quite substantial investors in the United States in the last three, four, five years--for all sorts of reasons--but I think the fact that we in effect were dealing closer and were trusting each other more also enabled them to open up more to the United States.

Q: I don't know the country, only from what I've read about it. Finland lost, but they kind of won, the Winter War with the Soviet Union in 1939. They lost a good solid hunk of the Karelian Isthmus, which is sort of the heartland of Finland but it's under Soviet occupation now. How did we view Finland? Was this a country that was neutral but really wouldn't like to be neutral, would really like to be in the West? Or, because of its politics and all, was it really sympathetic to the Soviet Union?

SCHNABEL: I think that the Finns, after that war, which was the second one in so many years... The Continuation War was the one in 1940. Actually, you had two different wars, separate wars

two different years. I don't think that the word "sympathetic" could be used, even though, of course, there was a Communist Party in Finland, so there were people that indeed...

But there were also many people, many people, and I mean the majority of people, that accepted the deal with the Soviet Union that they cut, in 1948 I believe it was, the security agreement, simply because they saw it as a necessity to survive. And they recognized that if they did not make such an agreement that they would not be a neutral country. So they lived up to the rules and the understandings for a long time, for security reasons but also for pure self interest--and that is, for business reasons.

Because for many, many, many years, the Finns were one of the very few countries that had a very privileged trade agreement with the Soviets, that only in the last year or two, because of the major changes, is beginning to kind of come unraveled. But prior to that the Finns were selling large amounts of products into the Soviet Union, which went through a trade account where they in effect received oil in return. And when the price of oil was going up, of course, the more they could sell them and so on, it was a very profitable and good deal for them. So, from the security standpoint, they recognized that, sitting next to their large neighbor, they had to do something.

So, "sympathetic," I think, is not the word. I think the Finns are very independent, deep in their hearts have been pro-American right along, are entrepreneurial people, and really wouldn't have lived under a Communist regime very happily.

They had a Communist Party, a Communist Party that for the last, oh, ten years or so has been declining and today is no longer a real viable thing at all of course.

But it was already coming undone when I was there. I remember giving a speech somewhere that was a little bit aggressive on the potential bankruptcy of Communism, actually, in 1987 or '88 thereabouts. And that was maybe at that time still a little bit too far ahead of the game, but their Communist Party was falling apart at that time already. I mean, even before the Soviets really literally gave up on the concept.

Q: How were your relations, and how did you operate with the Finnish government on the various issues?

SCHNABEL: I had very open, very direct, relationships with everybody from the president on down. I made it a point to get to know President Mauno Koivisto relatively well. He was a very, very bright politician, with a banker's background which helped me a little bit. But we would get together for luncheons. I couldn't say that it was a personal friendship relationship, but I think a relationship that development into one of a good deal of respect. He had met Vice President Bush, who had come to Finland at some point before I was there, and I think there was a liking between those two gentlemen. When Secretary Shultz came through, or any of the other cabinet members, he always very much enjoyed that. So my relationship there was a good one.

With the ministers I was pretty much across the board very open and available. They were always available it seemed. Now of course I'm sure that that's true with most American ambassadors wherever they are. But in my case, of course, I saw mostly the trade minister and

the minister of finance. They were really the ones that I was closest to. They were relatively young, they had business backgrounds, so, again, I was able to talk to them relatively easily. Whereas, maybe the minister of defense was somebody that I had a lesser relationship with. Even though the generals, the people that were running the armed forces, I was quite close to on a personal basis.

Q: Was there a feeling, for example, of sort of hands off their military, don't try to sell them F-16s and this sort of thing, I mean, just not to rock the boat?

SCHNABEL: Yes, well, in the beginning there was no question that that probably was so. At one point, knowing that they had to replace their older Swedish and Soviet equipment at some point (I think it was the mid-90s that it's coming up, 1994 or something like that), we did have an attempt to sell them the F-20, the Northrop aircraft, which of course didn't sell anywhere else so the Finns weren't interested in that. However, they started to show a potential interest in the F-16, which obviously you've seen or read about or something.

Q: Well, actually, I just dragged the F-16 out. I know we're selling it in Europe.

SCHNABEL: Everybody of course knew that the replacement of those aircraft was coming up, that was in the press and so on and so forth, so we did try. And I remember being quite involved, just before I left, probably in the last nine months or so, in getting an agreement. It was not a very formal agreement, but an understanding between the Department of Defense here and the Finnish government and the Department of Defense in Finland, that they in effect would be allowed to buy certain types of aircraft from us, and the technology level. And because of that agreement that we signed with them, the Five K agreement, and the better understanding and the better relationship, we then ("we" meaning the Pentagon) allowed them to also acquire high technology aircraft--up to a certain point. And as a matter of fact, we are in the process, as I understand it, at the moment to actively sell that aircraft to them. And we're talking about a pretty good-size order, an order that could at least run up to between five hundred million and a billion dollars. And just recently, during the summit in Helsinki, I went over with Secretary Mosbacher to sit down with both the trade ministers, to let them know...

Q: We're talking about September of 1990.

SCHNABEL: Right, right. I went over specifically with the secretary of commerce and had recommended to him that it would probably be good... At the suggestion, by the way, of the American ambassador in place right now. But I could totally understand what he was talking about, that it would be a good idea for a high-level American to be seen to be interested in the sale of this American product to the Finnish armed forces.

Those meetings took place, and I had the good fortune of returning with the president on that trip. So I literally went over for these meetings and turned right around and came back again. And I, in effect, briefed the president on it, mentioned that one of the reasons I had gone over with the secretary (who happened to be going to the Soviet Union anyway, so it was a very good coincidence), but that one of the things was that it was important that the Finns recognize that we in the United States government were very keen on that. Because the competition, being

primarily the French... The French, of course, are working this all the way to the top. They're constantly there and they're constantly helping their private sector to make these kinds of sales. We had been less involved in this particular one, so I think the fact that the secretary of commerce showed up at that meeting was very...

Q: Well, this is very interesting, because I know I speak as a long-time veteran, and one of the great complaints is that at the embassies we can't differentiate between the General Dynamics F-16 and a Northrop F-20 or what have you, or whatever kind of tanks or something. Which means that often we end up by canceling each other out. Whereas, the French or the British will go in, concentrate on one weapons system, and just put all the pressure on that.

SCHNABEL: Yes, they're very good at it. And not only on weapons systems, by the way. The French, in particular, every time there was a major sale involved, whether it was a paper mill or whether it was an automobile plant or whatever, the government got involved.

Now in your days in the State Department this was probably not done. The United States government people didn't get involved in trade issues. I know for a fact that Deputy Secretary Eagleburger has a cable out to all of our ambassadors to be involved in trade. Vitally important for American ambassadors to be seen to promote the United States' exports. That's part of their job, they ought to be out there doing it. I do not recall ever getting a cable from George Shultz saying that, even though, in discussions, in general, of course, we were expected to do that. But it is relatively new, I think.

Q: I think it is. But the other thing was there was always the canceling out thing. That if you tried to do it, there would be screams and yells from somebody, who might not have even been a competitor. But if they made a fuss, that if you were trying to sell buses, somebody who was turning out a bus which was really only for the Phoenix area or something like that, they'd say, "What are you doing? We might sell our bus there." And you ended up in conflict. I think this sounds like a much more healthy way to go about it.

SCHNABEL: I think so, too. And I think it is incumbent upon us. And it's happening more and more. I know that the vice president of the United States has gotten involved in sales of telecommunications equipment, for instance, in the Far East. The secretary of commerce is out there doing it constantly, because he's very aware that the mission here, of course, in this department, is exports. So, to me, it was very logical, and I was very, very happy to see that that was becoming a part of official policy in the United States. Because other countries are doing it, and we ought to be doing it too because we're competing with them.

Q: We're a little late.

SCHNABEL: Yes. Yes, we are.

Q: Were there any issues, either political or economic, that you found particularly difficult in your relations with the Finns? I mean, trying to explain either American politics, or the system, or UN votes, or our foreign policy relations.

SCHNABEL: There were some UN votes that we didn't like. I recall the Finnish vote on Grenada. That was a vote in which the Finns, I believe, abstained. We did not agree with that, of course, and we went out and made that point very clear. I must say, during the time that I was there, other than that, I don't believe there was anything that we took issue with. Even the attack on Libya. The Finns were very low key on that.

Q: This was a bombing raid in retribution for the Libyan's bombing of a disco in West Berlin.

SCHNABEL: Right, exactly. In 1986. That's right. And we went in there and of course bombed some major targets in Libya. The Finns reaction--very low key. The Finns literally made it very clear that neutral meant neutral, and they very seldom took strong positions on issues. So we may have not liked what they did, because we felt that they should take stronger positions on things, but we didn't really have major conflicts. And the occasional UN vote, we did deliver demarches on those, but they were very few and far between.

And I would say again, and it's fairly clear in my mind, that during that period of time that there was a fairly open, even in the press, statements that were quite pro-American. They were delighted to see President Reagan come there. It was a big, big, big, big thing. George Shultz coming there a number of times was a big thing for them, because they were being recognized as a nation and as an individual, independent country by those visits, of course. So we had very few problems of any magnitude.

In the trade area we pressed them very hard and are continuing to do so on the agricultural supports. Because Finland is very big on subsidizing their farming because of their very unique position in the world, with the temperatures, where they are, and it's a very good-sized country. The country is really occupied to the north by small farmers, and without the subsidies they basically can't exist. And they're afraid that these area would become depopulated. So that's an issue, if you will.

The technology transfer was an issue. On the other hand, we've worked them out. We made it very clear early on that, for instance, these particular items that they were building for the Soviets, which were deep-sea vessels, submersibles, that we very much opposed the delivery of those vessels to the Soviet Union in that technology. And they, in effect...I don't know whether acquiescing is the right word, but we, in effect, arrived at an agreement there that the technology wouldn't be transferred. And that then became part of the subsequent agreement that we put together.

But they recognized that they needed to do it, they needed to be working with us, because otherwise they may become excluded from the world of trade. And they recognized that their future would be with the West as opposed to where it had been, because of course they saw the economic problems within the Soviet Union. And they recognized they had to turn West, not only because we had the technology, but also because that's where the economic growth was. They're very aware of their own nationalist...

Q: How did they play their role as sort of a junction between the East and West?

SCHNABEL: I think they were aware of the fact that it was probably internationally played up more by us than they thought it was in reality the case. I think that we thought that Finland probably had a great deal of information. And they had a fair deal of information.

I think the Finns themselves are the type of people that didn't overbill the case. They're very down-to-earth and realistic people. As I said, tough and independent, but not a country or a people that tend to oversell themselves by any means. If anything, undersell themselves. So they themselves didn't push that so much.

I think that we felt that because of their location, because of their good trade relations, and of course also because of the fact that they had been dealing in the Soviet Union... Many of the companies in Finland had offices in Moscow, while American companies, for instance, would not. So they had had people on the ground. They had people all around the country building things for the Soviets and so on, so they came back with input.

And, yes, that input was helpful. The fact that the president of Finland was close to the Soviet leadership, was on a good basis, spoke the language, understood what was going on, I think, made them a source of information that was very good to us. But they themselves didn't really build it up. They're not very good salesmen, really, and they don't try to be, I don't think.

Q: It's probably refreshing.

SCHNABEL: In a way, yes, yes.

Q: How well did you find yourself served by the embassy? You'd run a banking firm and all this, and you were used to running things. You came and here was another operation, how did you find it? I'm talking about the staff of the embassy and how it operated and all.

SCHNABEL: I met him, of course, through the State Department, and I talked to maybe ten different people who... He is presently the consul general, has moved from there to Canada, and he's in, I think, Montreal. Very good.

The people were very good. The military, I would say, was first rate. Commerce people were okay. Economics people were okay. The agency was good. It's a matter of people, of course, but they worked, I thought, quite well as a team.

We had some problems. Unfortunately, the Finns are a somewhat isolated, insulated people, and they're not very tolerant of minorities. And we had some incidents with the military. We had the Marine Corps, of course, and that was... Nothing of any major consequence, but we had some difficulties there. So I think that the African-American part of the... times that they were not terribly happy because of that.

The Finns are very much...they say we have a little country here, very unique, very unique language, the climate, and they're not really inviting people from outside.

WILLIAM P. KIEHL
Public Affairs Officer, Deputy Chief of Mission
Helsinki (1987-1991)

William P. Kiehl was born in Pennsylvania in 1945. He received a BS from the University of Scranton in 1967 and an MA from the University of Virginia in 1970. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he was posted in Belgrade, Zagreb, Colombo, Moscow, Prague, Helsinki, London and Bangkok. Mr. Kiehl was interviewed in 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Today is the 8th of January 2004. Bill, how did you find Finnish?

KIEHL: Well, it was the hardest language I ever tried to learn.

Q: It has a reputation for being. What was the problem?

KIEHL: For one thing, the Finns, like some other obscure European languages, invented their language in the 18th and 19th century.

Q: Sort of cock you ear type thing or something?

KIEHL: The idea was to make it as difficult – first of all, to codify what was a spoken language, essentially, but also to make it as difficult for foreigners to learn as possible. Foreigners meaning Russians, because they always had a fear that the Russians would take them over.

Q: They were taken over until 1917.

KIEHL: '17, that's right. They were taken over by the Swedes before that, of course, they were part of the Swedish kingdom before that. They tried to come up with a language that was just too damn difficult for anybody to want to learn, and of course the Finns were very good at learning other peoples' languages. The rulers, foreign rulers, of Finland were quite happy to deal in their own language with the Finns, and the Finns could then talk about anything they wanted without fear of being overhead. There's a certain element of that to it. But of course it's a Fenno-Uralic language. It doesn't follow the rules of European languages at all, it's got 14 cases, it has not only a nominative stem but a genitive stem from which cases are formed, it is just mind-boggling. As a language it's – I don't know of a single person, who was not a native speaker of Finnish as a child, who can speak the language fluently. I'm sure there are some..

Q: In teaching it, though, how did you find, for an American – how old were you when you took this?

KIEHL: Let's see, I was 42.

Q: So you were somewhat past the age of puberty, when your languages abilities peter out.

KIEHL: Exactly, the channels are formed already. Really, you'd have to be a little crazy to try to learn a language like Finnish after age 40. Fortunately, I didn't have to get a 3/3. The language requirement was a 2/2. I'm not sure why, but it was.

Q: I would think it would have to deal with what you've got. If you're going to be dealing essentially in English or German or something ...

KIEHL: Almost every contact with the embassy in Finland spoke English. There were a couple Parliamentarians from mid-Finland and north whose English was so rudimentary that it really didn't make sense to talk to them in English. There was no one in the Helsinki region or in the wide swath of the populated area of Finland along the coasts who didn't know English, and many of them probably knew English better than most Americans do. It wasn't really a problem.

I was lucky, in a sense, because I didn't have to go to FSI to learn this. Of course, USIA in those days was charged the same fee that any other agency would be at FSI which was, I think in those days, about \$20,000 or \$25,000 for the ten-month course. They could get it cheaper in various language schools around town, and they were much more flexible. You still had to pass the FSI test, but these language schools were in competition and therefore had lower rates. So I had signed up with a language school up on 16th Street in downtown Washington, but there were three teachers. I had three different teachers, one on one, for about 5 or 6 months, and passed the FSI test, same as if I had taken the full course at FSI. So I think it paid off.

The three different teachers were rather interesting, too, because one was from Karelia, so she spoke with a kind of Karelian accent and had lots of these Karelianisms.

Q: Karelia being the part that was taken over by the Soviets after World War II.

KIEHL: That's right, the lost territory. Another was from Jyväskylä, and that's supposedly the center of the purest Finnish, the most book Finnish. She was a rather a bit of a task-master, too. Third was a young woman who was, I think, the daughter of one of the embassy employees here, who was a Swedo-Finn and spoke Helsinki Finnish. The Karelian would say, "This is the most sacred Finnish from the lost territory." The other one would say, "I'm from Jyväskylä and you'll learn the real Finnish, the book Finnish, the exact Finnish that everyone is learning in school and university." And the little, young Swedo-Finn said, "I know what they told you, but I'm speaking the language you're going to hear on the street everyday." She was pretty much right, but it was a nice combination of the three teachers.

I had worked it out so that when the weather got a little warmer they would come over and we'd sit in my garden and they'd do the course for three or four hours straight. It was very pleasant. I think if I had been maybe 20 years younger I probably would have gotten the Finnish down pretty well. As it was I knew enough Finnish to get around fine, and ask directions and order meals and drinks and the like, and I could also deliver speeches in Finnish, which I thought was very important, because I could mimic the accent. I could read it perfectly well, so I could write a little opening speech for some art exhibit or something like that in the provinces and my staff would translate it into Finnish and I would practice it a couple times and it would come out perfectly fine. It was a big hit, of course, because Finns look upon foreigners who speak Finnish

as one would look upon a dancing bear. It's just an amazing thing. You wouldn't want to take it into your house but it's fun to watch at the fairground.

Q: What were you picking up about Finland even prior to your going? I mean, before you went to Finland, often you, from Finnish teachers and from your reading and from people who served there and all, your sort of individual briefing – how did you see Finland and what were our interests there and that sort of thing?

KIEHL: Of course I had visited Finland before, when I was Prague, the year before I was assigned there – the summer that I left Prague I went there to see my predecessor and stayed with him for a couple of days to look the place over. And, of course, I visited Finland from Russia a number of times. It was our escape hatch; it was the Prozac for people living in Moscow. As a way of decompressing you take this courier run on the train up to Helsinki on the non-pro courier run. You'd deliver the diplomatic bag and pick up the bag and you had three days at the hotel InterContinental. You could have a pizza, you could get a hamburger; you could go to movies and see things that were a part of the Western world again. It was great. Everybody who was in Moscow had this kind of idealistic world view of Finland as being a perfect place because, in contrast to the privations of the Socialist world, it was the perfect place. I remember when the train would pull into the first border station and not only I but everyone else who ever took this run did exactly the same thing. One person stayed with the bag and the other would leap off the train, because it was a very short stop, run into the little café, get a couple of coffees and some Danishes to go and run back to the compartment and you would feast on this all the way into Helsinki. It was like heaven. When you think about it, it was really kind of pathetic.

Q: People used to say that about getting to Belgrade from when they left Sofia.

KIEHL: Even Nis. From Nis it was a big deal.

Q: This was a big deal. They'd say, "Oh, my God."

KIEHL: Right. There was a great restaurant in Nis called Kod Americanac [At the American's] that had decent food. Do you recall that one?

Q: I'm not sure it was there in my time.

KIEHL: The owner of the restaurant actually wasn't American, he was a Serb who emigrated to the States and worked there and then came back home to spend his retirement, and with his savings opened a restaurant. I think he had died by the time I first ate there, but his family kept running it and it was always full of happy Americans.

Q: Well, anyway, when you went out – in the first place, you were in Finland from when to when?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, good question. June of '87 through '91, I think July of '91, but there were a couple of occasions – and I'll have to verify the dates a little bit – but a couple of occasions during that that I was out of Finland. In other words, I did some advance work for a presidential visit to Ukraine and I was out for a couple of months then – six weeks or so, I guess – and then

right after Finland I did two things, I did the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) conference on the human dimension in Moscow and then also did a little shopping trip for the government to try and rent spaces for American centers in Central Asia.

Q: We'll talk about that a little later.

KIEHL: Later. I'm pretty sure – it was four years, definitely.

Q: In '87, when you went out there, what was the status of our relations with Finland and what did Finland mean to the United States at that time?

KIEHL: Finland had some pluses and really no real minuses. Of course, most Americans remember Finland as the country that paid its debts.

Q: After World War I, yes.

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: The Winter War, too.

KIEHL: The Winter War and they really put up a fight, tough people, et cetera. I think the American opinion of Finland was, well, it was "Finlandized", a term which the Finns didn't like much, because what it meant was a kind of forced neutrality. The Finns never saw it that way, of course.

The other thing that the Americans thought of Finns was that they were shy, reticent people, not very demonstrative, who drank a lot. The Russians shared that view of the drinking because the worst thing a Russian could say to another Russian was, "You were as drunk as a Finn last night." How's that for a Russian to say? Terrible!

Q: Was there any reflection of the Finnish community in the United States on Finland?

KIEHL: The Finnish community in the U.S. actually was rather close to Finland and there was a lot of exchange back and forth, especially in Michigan and Minnesota, in that area, where there's a large Finnish-American community.

Q: Woodsmen, mainly, weren't they, or miners?

KIEHL: Yes, miners and woodsmen. Of course they've spread around in all the various professions, with some farmers, as well – kind of Lake Wobegon-type positions.

Q: A bachelor Finnish farmer ...

KIEHL: As opposed to a Norwegian farmer, pretty much the same.

Q: We're referring to a radio program put on by Garrison Keillor. Very popular.

KIEHL: Right, on National Public Radio. There was Finlandia University – a number of the universities in that area have a good relationship with Finland. The Finnish-American society in Finland was an organization that was an extremely powerful organization with 70,000 members. In a country of 5 million that's pretty impressive.

Of course the Finns loved these blankety-blank dash Finnish societies or Finnish blankety-blank societies, I guess. There was a Finnish-Soviet friendship society as well, of course, which probably had about 300,000 members because the labor unions all signed up for it and so on, but it was a moribund organization, it was just a façade to keep the Russians happy, one of those many façades that the Finns put up.

Q: Well, then, what did you see as your mission to do in Finland?

KIEHL: The mission there was to make sure the Finns understood that America was a good and faithful friend of Finland and that we appreciated the Finnish path in foreign policy and important conduit they could be for U.S.-Soviet relations, because Finland was seen really in the U.S.-Soviet context, there wasn't really a U.S. interest per se in Finland that could be separated from the U.S.-Soviet issue.

Q: You have the Helsinki Accords, I mean, this will sort of ring down through history as being very important.

KIEHL: Oh, yes. Of course, that's an accident of location, but it is important. The Helsinki Accords, exactly. Finland did play an important role as a meeting place, for the U.S. and the Soviet Union for a long time. It struck me that when I was studying Finnish, I learned about the fact that 1988 was going to be the 350th anniversary of the first Finns in America. Now, these were Finns who were under the Swedish crown that started out these little settlements on the Delaware River in what is now Delaware and southern Pennsylvania. There was a move afoot to have a postage stamp to commemorate this, and that was about it. But the Finns thought it was a wonderful thing. There was not much interest outside the Finnish-American community in the U.S. but of course I was in touch with the Finnish-American community so I learned about it. It occurred to me that this would be a tremendous vehicle to piggyback onto, and so I decided that this was the vehicle we were going to use to further these interests, and it was a once in 350-year occasion -- actually, 1989 was another one, because that was the 70th anniversary of the treaty of friendship between the U.S. and Finland, so I had that in the back of my mind.

These were both symbolic dates but they were, shall we say, unexploited symbolic dates, and I figured this is the perfect way to exploit them. So what I did is, when I went out there, I put together a little plan to get the approval of Ambassador to Finland Rockwell Schnabel, and he immediately saw the value in it.

Q: Schnabel had been chief of protocol at one point, hadn't he?

KIEHL: No, that was Ambassador Weinmann. You're thinking of John Weinmann, who was the next ambassador.

Q: Schnabel had – what was his background?

KIEHL: An interesting background – he was born in the Netherlands and his family was in the printing business there, but he immigrated to the United States as a young man and settled in California, became a surfer, the Southern California lifestyle, He was a smart guy and got into investment banking and was actually a partner with Michael Milken. At one time he owned, I think, 7-Up and Dr. Pepper and Berringer Wines and all sorts of things. So he amassed a large fortune in the investment banking business in Southern California and was an early and ardent supporter of a fellow named Ronald Reagan, thus the connection there.

He married a woman – his wife, Marna, was, in her own right, a rather shrewd businesswoman. I think she was president or vice-president of a pharmaceutical company in California and her family dates back to the land-grant days, of the Spanish land-grants in California. So both were pretty well-connected and quite wealthy – in fact, after they left Finland they got Frank Garry to design a house for them. They bought a house that was worth a couple million dollars and tore it down and had him put a \$10 million house on this piece of property. So, I mean, obviously they had a lot of money.

He was a very intelligent guy in a lot of ways. A great, wonderful personality – he was great with business people and so on, of course, but what he recognized was that he didn't know much about foreign policy and he left a lot of that to the embassy.

Q: Who was the DCM?

KIEHL: Well, initially Mike Durkee was the DCM, and he was a pro, of course, a Navy veteran who served in a couple of – about, by that time, at least 15 or so years in the Foreign Service.

Q: Durkee, how do you ...

KIEHL: D-U-R-K-E-E. And he just retired – he was the political advisor over at Shape until this past summer. I lost track of him after that because he was wondering what he was going to do after that. He had the job as a retiree. He retired from the Foreign Service perhaps five years ago, after being consul general in Toronto and then he went to London as the political advisor at CINCUSNAVEUR [US Navy Headquarters in Europe]. Then he segued over to Belgium and worked for NATO Commander General Rallston and retired. Rallston liked him so much that he hired him on as a contractor.

Q: Anyway, in the first place, how did you find the embassy? Was it a cohesive unit, split, problems ...

KIEHL: Yes, it was an interesting embassy. Let me just finish up this Year of Friendship, I can get that off the plate. So, I came up with this plan which would, essentially, have a logo for the Year of Friendship, and everything we did, starting January 1, 1988, would have this logo on it. Everything would refer to the Year of Friendship. Everything that we would do anyway would do that. We'd also try to involve – get a presidential message, maybe a presidential visit, high-

level visits during that period, marking the event, a publication of some books and journals on that subject, speakers talking about the friendship between the two countries, et cetera, the history and all that.

So I think there were maybe 35 or more different programs that were part of the package, I'd say, that would take place in 1988. Of course, I had about 6 months to line all this up so there was enough time to do that. That actually all worked, including Reagan's speech on nationwide television for about five or ten minutes. We had Finlandia Hall filled for the event. Reagan came on the big screen with this speech about U.S.-Finnish friendship. The hall was filled with people thanks to the Finnish-American society energizing them, so there were 2,000 or 3,000 people in the audience. It was an entire program about U.S.-Finnish friendship, covered by nationwide television and radio, so the speech was seen throughout the country. It kicked off a \$5 million fundraising campaign for scholarships for Finns to study in America through a Fulbright program. That was all part of the plan. So it worked out. It was fantastic.

Q: Were you able to play the former governor of New Hampshire in there?

KIEHL: No, I wasn't able to do that, actually.

Q: It Sununu, wasn't it?

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: He didn't go down well?

KIEHL: No. You have to understand the Finns. The most conservative Finn, is probably a Dean Democrat.

Q: Aha. So Sununu, being the far right ...

KIEHL: Reagan they liked, I think probably because he bated the Russian bear a little bit. In any event, back to the embassy, I'm sorry.

It was a very comfortable place to live, Finland. The embassy was in a lovely location, but by today's standards, of course, it was a sitting duck for terrorism. The ambassador's office window was literally three feet off the street. You could reach across the little iron fence and tap on his window from outside and he would look. Can you imagine this today? That was also the ambassador's residence, because the two connected through a little passage, right into his living room. Of course, obviously, they've made some security improvements since then but, well, not to digress too much, but back in Prague, when you arrived at the embassy in Prague, they'd give you two keys, the two keys to the front door of the embassy. Most people who had apartments in the complex gave a copy of the keys to their maid, as well. So you could probably find a key to the U.S. embassy down on Charles Bridge in those days. It was, by today's standards, ludicrous.

In any event, it was a pretty good embassy. Without getting into too many details it was probably one of the major intelligence-gathering, listening posts in the world. So a good many of the staff

had duties in that end of the work. The State Department had some very good people there. There were a fair number of Finnish-Americans who spoke quite good Finnish who were on the staff at the embassy on the reporting side, I should say, and in the defense attaché's office. Other than that there were political and econ officers who spoke Finnish fairly well, about my level, I guess, and a couple who spoke quite good Swedish. So embassy officers in the community were very well integrated into Finnish society. This is, of course, in full contrast to my previous post in Prague where only a few of us were actually involved in the society and most people were, shall we say, alienated from it.

Q: What was, from your perspective, the political element in Finland. Where was it going, how interested were we in it and in reporting on it and all that?

KIEHL: Well, obviously the State Department reporting on Finnish domestic politics didn't have a huge audience back in the United States. The embassy continued to do it very well because we had extraordinarily good contacts in the political parties all the way across, except possibly for the extreme left. But even there our political section could have pretty good conversations with people and report it. You have to understand that almost everything in Finland revolved around the U.S.-Soviet relationship. There really wasn't much interest in Washington, in Finland for itself. It was Finland as a listening post, it was Finland as an intermediary, it was Finland as a kind of conduit of information, but it wasn't Finland for Finland's sake.

Q: Were we under new instructions or did it behoove us not to press our antagonistic – of course, this was an interesting time – but had it been our policy not to overplay our anti-Soviet side in Finland because that might upset the Finns? Were they having this balance between this or not or could we do whatever the hell we wanted?

KIEHL: We could do pretty much whatever the hell we wanted, but realistically there wasn't much we could do in terms of expressing anti-Soviet views. You have to understand, also, that in that period, by '87 or so, the fallout from Afghanistan had pretty well settled, and U.S.-Soviet relations were warming again. In fact, they warmed so much that Reagan and Gorbachev had a meeting there and Bush and Gorbachev had a meeting in Helsinki. So the summits were back on track and Schultz was running through Helsinki about five times a year on his way to Moscow, because he always liked to take a little bit of a ...

Q: This is more a break place.

KIEHL: It was a break place for him, but it was also a way for him to sit down with then-president, Koivisto, and discuss these things with the Finns, because the Finns were always seen to have insights on Russia that would be interesting and unique.

Q: I would think that the Finnish insight into Russia would be somewhat similar to going to a country that has been abused by another country for decades and you know, I'm not sure what it was like, talking to an estranged wife or something like that. I would think their insight would be warped somewhat.

KIEHL: I think everybody's insight is warped by the circumstances.

Q: But there particularly.

KIEHL: Actually, I think the Finns were pretty objective. I mean, there were some Finns who said, “A Russian is a Russian whether you fry him in butter or not.” That’s a good Finnish expression. And certainly the people who were displaced from Karelia and who lost property, who lost family, all those things – there was a large contingent of people, perhaps 10% of the population, who were unreconciled regarding World War II, but the Finns were, if anything, very realistic about what they could do there. Russia was their big market and they did what they needed to do, first of all, to keep the Russians on the other side of the border, from crossing the border, and secondly, to make money out of the Russians. So they were very good at that, and I think that tempered what might have been more the estranged wife complex that you talked about.

In any event, the perception on the U.S. side was that the Finns had something, some insights, on Russia that would be useful to us. The Finns, for their part, were convinced that they did, also. So Schultz always had – I mean, it wasn’t just a rest stop. He always had some serious meetings – not just banter over lunch, but some serious discussions.

Q: How about the Finnish press? You dealt with the Finnish press?

KIEHL: Yes

Q: Where did they fall, did they have, sort of, the yellow journalism that you think of as the Brits having or was it more derring-do (ph) or ...

KIEHL: Very much unlike the Brits, actually, although, some of the more serious papers would say “We’re like the Times,” whenever the Times was really the Times. The big paper there was the Helsingin Sanomat, which had about a million in circulation in a country of 5 million people. It was everybody’s newspaper. It was run by the Sanomat Corporation which was run by a formidable fellow named Aatos Erkkö, and Aatos Erkkö was the son of a former foreign minister of Finland who broadcast from Sweden resistance to the Russians back in World War II and was quite a hero of Finnish history. Aatos Erkkö was a very intelligent guy, more business-oriented than his father, I think, and more journalistically oriented, although the family had had this paper for three generations.

He really built up the paper and acquired – and also, there’s an evening paper called Ilta-Sanomat and a whole panoply of magazines and other media enterprises. They also had a cable TV franchise and other things. Today it’s one of the powerhouse media organizations in Northern Europe. Aatos Erkkö was a recipient, back in the late ‘40s, of one of the first ASLA grants. The ASLA grant program was essentially an IV type program but it was paid for out of the Finnish war debt, which then merged with the Fulbright program. So it was really known as an ASLA Fulbright, because even the Fulbright program in Finland today is known as ASLA Fulbright because the money is now Fulbright commission money. In those days there was a lot of money for Finland and the U.S. government supplemented that money mainly because in the 1940s Finland was in danger of being swallowed up by Russia and so the U.S., (much as they did

in the Baltics right after independence), flushed money in there and sent people to the U.S. to be exposed to Western ideals, and then back home, hopefully as a bulwark against the “Sovietization” rather than “Finlandization” of the country.

Aatos Erkko was a young man who went to Columbia University and got a degree in journalism and then he had a 10 month or 11 month long ASLA Fulbright program where he traveled around the United States, met with people, saw people, was exposed to every facet of America and went back home. In part because of that and in part because of his family tradition, he was an extremely pro-American individual. He saw real value in Finland’s relationship with the U.S. He was a Board Member of the Scandinavian-American Association in New York. He owns a lot of real estate in New York, as well. So, I mean, the family is well-connected. His wife is American, an ice-skater, actually.

So the family – he had no children, so he and his wife and his sister were the controlling family members of the corporation.

Q: Was there any reflection, from one side or the other, of the preoccupation in Sweden of showing the dark side of America?

KIEHL: Interestingly, there wasn’t. The Finns had a more – I think the Swedes had the luxury of having Finland between themselves and Russia whereas Finland had no luxury like that. The Finns knew the Russians and I would say were probably more committed to the Western alliance than some NATO members would be. We were under no illusions that the Finns would not fight if the Russians crossed the border, because they had 55 times and lost 55 times throughout their history and they would do it again in a minute. That was, I’m sure, certainly a factor. The Finns would fight – they’d lose, but they would fight.

Q: It seems – I mean, I’m talking about areas where I’ve never served and all, but this is what I picked up. Sweden seems to have picked up, at least during the Vietnam war and beyond, this sort of anti-American virus in its intelligentsia.

KIEHL: Yes. There was a large number of Swedes like that. That’s not to say there weren’t some Finns like that, too, in the Swedo-Finnish community there were some, and there were some intellectuals who were a little disdainful of the United States. You know, “a pox on both your houses, Russia and America!” There was a vocal Communist party there, in Finland, and I’m sure it made up the bulk of the membership of the Soviet-Finnish society. Also, most of the leading politicians in Finland were on the rolls of the Soviet-Finnish friendship society, and only a small number of those, who really wanted to join, were members of the Finnish-American society, but it was sort of considered necessary to be a member of the Soviet-Finnish Society. So there was that tacit understanding that you had to play the game with the Russians, but beyond that there were some intellectuals who, certainly – some of the labor unions were very heavily pro-Soviet, pro-Russian, anti-American.

There was a kind of anarchist group there that was anti-American and there were some intellectuals who were very hard to convince of anything good coming from American post-Vietnam. But that’s a small minority, all of them combined.

Q: On the unions, your observation – I mean, I take it Finns had a pretty good working relationship. In other words, I would assume they would be like the other Scandinavian countries where unions were powerful, they got good deals for their people and all that. All I do is look across the border and see that essentially there were no unions in the Soviet Union. Workers were exploited.

KIEHL: The union rank and file who went to Russia realized that. Union leaders there certainly knew it but, for a couple of reasons, continued their support.– They tended to support, for the most part, the Social Democrats rather than the Communist party but there were Communist unions. It is inexplicable as it might seem to a Finn to join the Communist party and belong to a Communist union when all they have to do is go over the Gulf of Finland and see what a miserable existence that is. Inexplicable as that is, it still occurred. There were at least – well, when the Communists trot out, you know, on May Day, it was a perfect example of the two societies of Finland. You had the union-led May-Day parade on May 1st, usually over on the east side of Helsinki, which was the proletarian part of town. There were maybe 30,000 people participating. The Communist party was well-represented. The Social Democrats were well-represented, and also, even, Trotskyites and anarchists were represented, with black and red flags and so on. They did their bit, they made their march and so on.

In the center of town and over toward the university complex was Vappu (Labor Day). Vappu is May 1st, also, and Vappu is when all of the graduates who have the baccalaureate and have their little white caps, come back to the university and get stinking drunk, as does everyone in the town. There were probably a half a million people doing that, doing all kinds of crazy – you know, the kinds of things in a society where everything is sort of preordained. It's very straight-laced. You're born – and then you die, and this is how the path leads. Well, one day a year everybody goes bananas and that's Vappu.

The first time I went to Helsinki, I think, was on a May Day holiday. I wanted to get out of Moscow one May Day and just get away. We went there, and we happened to arrive on Vappu and I thought the world had gone mad. What the hell was going on here? Don't ever go to Finland on Vappu – unless you want to partake of it – because everyone is completely stinking drunk and throwing up and they're all wearing these caps, some of which are 50 years old now. The baccalaureate is really high school, it's a high school graduation. There are people fornicating in doorways, no social conventions are not flouted, it seems. Helicopters go over distributing condoms to the crowds. It's something that you have to see to believe. And this is going on at the same time the 30,000 dull as all-get-out Commies are over there marching for Socialism.

Q: I'd think that they would, at a certain point, down their banners and head for the center of town.

KIEHL: Well, except they didn't have baccalaureates. They were all blue collar people, they didn't have the ...

Q: Oh, the intellectual divide.

KIEHL: The intellectual divide, as well.

Q: Let's go sort of to the period. In the first place, we were talking about the press – could you get stuff you wanted in, I mean, did you feel that the United States' position was fairly presented?

KIEHL: Yes, I think so. Yes, we could get things in. It wasn't like my time in Sri Lanka where I could get anything into the newspaper. I mean, they needed the material to fill it. They couldn't afford Reuters anymore so we were the conduit for that. But in Finland you had to be careful what you put in. You wanted to go sparingly because you didn't want to cheapen the currency. So we were mainly after important pieces, bylines by the secretary of state or other senior officials that would spell out U.S. policy unambiguously. We also relied upon a whole lot of background material to Finnish writers who wrote editorials and foreign policy pieces. There were a number of senior former diplomats and senior officials who were now at think tanks and so on. We provided them with a lot of material and a lot of research material through our library so that they would be writing articles, and we knew, while we had no guarantees that they would echo the American position, we were pretty confident because of their background and their experience and their track record, that they would be writing things that would be favorable to the U.S. position. So we helped them out a lot and, in fact, our suppositions were correct. So we did pretty well with the press there, both directly placing things and also fostering a climate that was favorable to the U.S.

There were a couple of newspapers and a couple, obviously, in the left spectrum that were largely critical of the U.S., but the major newspapers – and again, the Helsingan Sanomat was everybody's newspaper, so I spent, probably, three quarters of my time dealing with the media, dealing with the Sanomat Corporation, the Helsingan Sanomat, the Ilta-Sanomat Sanoma also ran the photo service (Letikuva) for all the newspapers in Finland. It was all but a monopoly, it was so enormous compared to all the others, that it was certainly worth three-quarters of my time with the media to deal only with them. I had a very close, good relationship with not only Aatos Erkko who was the publisher, but also with the editor-in-chief, the head of the editorial board, the head of foreign news, et cetera. We were good friends as well as contacts and so we would lunch together and have drinks and discuss foreign policy issues and so on, and they had some formal events where I would talk to the editorial board about an issue or the ambassador would be brought in to talk to the editorial board about an issue. So that relationship was extremely important. It was probably the key relationship that I would have in Finland was with the Helsingan Sanomat.

Q: Did your Soviet counterpart have an equal relationship?

KIEHL: No.

Q: Was it just the normal Soviet inability to make the jump or that the state of relations between the two countries wasn't ...

KIEHL: Well, the state of relations between Finland and Russia were officially quite close but the Sanoma Corporation was not well-disposed to the Soviet Union, although Aatos Erkko and

many of his journalists were very expert on developments in Russia. They had their own sources of intelligence in Russia that were quite good. They had developed a lot of contacts in Soviet society over many years and so they knew probably as much about Russia as U.S. intelligence did, I would say.

Q: Well, we're talking about '87 to '91 which is, essentially, as critical a time as 1917 to 1920 was, dealing with this massive thing called the Soviet Union/Russia.

KIEHL: Well, there's also a subdivision of that which is very important which were the Baltics, of course. Estonia in particular was a focus of Finnish foreign policy to a great extent, more and more as we approached 1991.

Q: How did this – in the first place, when you got there, how were the Finns, in your reflections – of course no one had the pull (ph) to get internet – had the CNN (Cable News Network) phenomenon hit Finland? Was it beginning to – I mean, this is the worldwide television broadcasting company coming out of Atlanta, I guess, reporting all over. Had that hit and engaged the Finns?

KIEHL: The Finns were actually so far ahead of the U.S. by and large on things. Yes, CNN was there. I mean, it was a presence, and the Finnish cable system had it. Now that's only 300,000 people in the greater Helsinki area, but people had cable, a lot of people had cable, even provincial people had cable. The Finnish TV also used a relationship with CNN. We also had, when I first got there – I should say the U.S. Information Service in Helsinki had its own identity, separate from the embassy. It was called the America Center and it was in a building in downtown Helsinki directly across from the main railway state which was the train to St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Q: Helsinki station.

KIEHL: The Helsinki station was on the other end of the line, of course. The Helsinki Rautatieasema {railway station} had two gigantic statues holding globes which were lights and it was just a fantastic building – it still is a fantastic building designed by Ariel Sarinen's father Eero Sarinen – and it was the center of the universe in Helsinki, I mean, it was the central point. The main post office was to its side and the main shopping district was here and the main department store was here and the Sanoma Corporation built its new headquarters here. Right across the street in a ten story building we had the entire fourth floor of that building for the America Center.

Q: Was it inside?

KIEHL: Well, I remember when I visited my predecessor that summer before I served there, one of the things that struck me was I when was downtown and he said, "Come on over to the office and meet some of the staff." It took me a half and hour and two phone calls before I could find the place because it was on the fourth floor of the building. There was no exterior sign; there was only a brass plaque inside the hallway of the building and an elevator going up. I was across from the train station and finally he said, "Well, look. Go to the phone booth right there at the

end of the station and look straight across the street, walk across the street. When you come to this building with kind of an aluminum-plaid first floor there go into it.” Finally he talked me into it. It was unbelievable, and it really ticked me off. I said, “What the hell is going on here? We have a public access library and it’s impossible to find? I’m not an idiot, if I can’t find it, nobody else can find it.” So I was determined that if we were going to have a public access library it was going to be public. One of the first things I did was install 6 foot high neon lights on that building which said America Center. I deliberately put them two floors above where we were located in case some terrorist lobbed a grenade– it would take out some publishing house two floors above us.

It was amazing, because then, for example, all the Russians who would come to Helsinki – and there were thousands who would come – would come out of the railway station and the first thing they’d see when they walked out of the front of the railway station was America Center, right across the street. The psychological value of that alone, was worth \$6,000--which is what the damned sign cost.

In that same building we had a huge dish antenna that was owned by the PTT (Post, Telegraph and Telephone) – we could get cable television that way but we also got WorldNet that way. It cost us \$35,000 a year for that stupid dish antenna. I got rid of that and we got our own dish antenna, cut the contract with the PTT and we could pull in all the same stations and get the WorldNet that way. Then we put another smaller dish over at the embassy so we could have a WorldNet studio there because this way we could get the embassy involved.

Q: You might explain what WorldNet is.

KIEHL: Oh, WorldNet was something that actually was created about 1985 by USIA. Actually, Charlie Wick was the guy who pushed it. I mean, he didn’t invent it but he did push it. It was a worldwide, 24-hour satellite broadcast from studios at USIA –over on H Street was the main switch for that – and it used documentary footage for most of the broadcast but the thing that was unique about is that it had two-way audio, one-way video links between a foreign audience and an American interlocutor. So you might have – in those days it was quite common to have the secretary of state answering questions from a panel of people from four different countries, connected by satellite. They would usually be journalists but sometimes political people as well or Parliamentarians. They would ask the questions, it was a Q&A format, it wasn’t a dialogue, the secretary of state or another high official or a university professor or an artist or a writer on the U.S. side would deal with either one country or several countries, their questions and comments on this performance. This was, generally, then used by local television and it could be done live or more commonly videotaped, and one of the television reporters would ask the questions with the secretary of state and then they would put in a picture of the television reporter and it would appear to be an exclusive interview.

It was extraordinarily successful, at least in the Reagan administration, when the secretary of state and other Cabinet-level people would do it, because Charlie was so powerful in the Reagan administration. After that it really became almost impossible to get any high-level people to do this, and there was a lot more competition for this kind of program. CNN, in essence, took the

audience away from WorldNet. It was probably something that was inevitable and the private sector probably should do it.

It evolved, of course, later on, into videoconferencing, where there was two-way video, two-way audio. I could talk about that a little bit later because I was involved in the creation of that program from USIA.

Q: This is after Finland?

KIEHL: After Finland.

Q: OK, so let's – well now, let's talk about the events of – we're talking about these crucial events up through the dissolution of the Soviet empire. How was that – what were you doing about it? How were you reacting to it, and what was the situation in Finland on this?

KIEHL: The situation in Finland was– the Finns had their Soviet plan. They dealt with the Soviet Union just as they always had, but at the same time there was a strong pull on the part of the Finns, both officially and unofficially, to help out their fellow linguistic brethren across the Gulf of Finland, particularly the Estonians, and the other Baltic states, too, because the Finns – while the others didn't fight the Finns did fight and the relationship was ...

Q: Now is this looking at – Estonia is what I thought it would be at the time, the topmost of the Baltic states.

KIEHL: Right. Estonian and Finnish are very kindred languages. The Estonians would watch the Finnish television. They could get Finnish television from across the Gulf of Finland. Finns had a lot of business interests there. Finns would also travel to Estonia on the ferry boat going across because of the cheap drinks. In Finland, Alko runs the state liquor monopoly, has very high prices, tries to put its money into educating the Finns not to drink themselves senseless, but in Estonia you can buy a bottle of vodka for the equivalent of a dollar which had a top that you couldn't even put back on because they knew they would not be needed. So Finns would go over there, they would drink a lot on the boat because it was duty-free, and then they'd get to Estonia – Tallinn – and go into a hotel and party until it was time to be poured back onto the boat back to Finland. In part I think the “drunk as a Finn” expression came out of those kinds of Finnish drinking vacations. It was the only place I've ever been, the Intourist hotel in Tallinn, where you heard a little tinkle of a bell in the hallway and you'd open your door and there would be a cart with a keg of beer on it and glasses and the guy was going down the hall dispensing beer to people, right into their room. They encouraged this, obviously, because it was a lot of hard currency coming in, but it was actually – again, it was sort of like Vappu, it was someplace you might want to see once but you wouldn't want to repeat.

Q: OK, let's go back to ...

KIEHL: Yes, the Finnish attitude was to help the Estonians and there was an organization in Estonia called the Esti Instituti, founded by a couple of people, one of whom was a guy named Lennart Meri who was a filmmaker and a writer who spent many years in Siberia, in exile, just

for being an Estonian nationalist. He was allowed to return to Estonia and take up his writing career a little bit and filmmaking career, and he had worked out some relationships with Finland so that the Finns would bring him over to Finland to work with the TV on documentary filmmaking and so. He was also kind of an anthropologist – he did some very important film on the indigenous peoples of Siberia. He was an intellectual, and he had good contacts in Finnish television and so on.

Finnish television, of course, was where I spent the other one-quarter of my media time. There were two stations at the time, two – YLE or Yleisradio, which was the name of the TV-radio combination there. I was pretty close to the directors of TV as well, it was a very important conduit to the Finnish public as well. But Lennart Meri was very close to these folks and did a lot of work for them and I honestly don't recall how we were introduced. I think it might have been through one of the TV people. We had some conversations and he kind of described for me what he hoped the Esti Instituti would turn into. I saw immediately that this was an area, that, if we chose to be helpful we could be very helpful to the Estonians. It would be an important way of preparing them, perhaps, for eventual independence.

I talked with our embassy about that and I also talked with the consul general in Leningrad, Dick Miles, an old friend, and Dick had no problems with it. In fact, he said, "Yes, this is a great thing. We are trying our best to do the same thing with these Baltic states from Leningrad. But it's easier for you, in a way, because they're coming to you." So this evolved a bit, over time, to the point where Lennart Meri and his young colleagues – it was interesting, the Estonians were either all people over 70, or late 60s anyway, or in their 20s. There was no middle generation that I ever met. They were all either old or very young. The old people remembered the Estonia before and the young people wanted it. The other generation, I think, was probably too cowed and too bullied and eliminated.

In any event, one of the young fellows was a guy named Yuri Luik, who later became a foreign minister of Estonia as well. He was 23 when this whole thing started. Anyway, it evolved a little bit into we would send our wireless file by fax to Lennart Meri at the Esti Instituti and they would distribute it throughout the Baltics. So the USIA Wireless Files were distributed to many people in the Baltics. For example to the president of – I think it was Latvia. The CG from Leningrad was visiting Riga. They were making some points and then the president of Latvia said to him, "Well, Mr. Miles, your own secretary of state yesterday said such-and-such," and Dick Miles was one of the few people who could carry this off, but the consulate in Leningrad had had communications problems and hadn't been able to get the wireless file for weeks. So he didn't have the benefit of this, and the Latvian pulls out a copy of one of the Helsinki press releases with the secretary of state's comment and brandishes it. Dick said, "Well, I hadn't seen that yet," because I've been traveling, but – . And sure enough it was our press release from Helsinki, a kind of faded photocopied photocopy or fax transmission of the item we had sent to Lennart Meri the day before. So that gives you an idea of how this material would get around.

We also sent an entire truckload of books from our library that we had weeded from our collection. They brought a truck over from the Esti Instituti on the ferry boat, brought it over, and we loaded all the books we had weeded onto it and they took it over and put it in their library in Tallinn. We sent speakers over there, and in most cases, what we'd do is we'd arrange for a

consular officer from Leningrad to escort that person because we didn't feel comfortable in sending our own people over there.

Q: We're talking about, essentially, two periods. There's the pre-independence and there's the independence, or at least in the fall ...

KIEHL: This is still pre-independence.

Q: I mean, it's all pre-independence. So, I mean, were ...

KIEHL: It was a little touchy ground. That's why I had to touch base with our embassy and the consulate in St. Petersburg, because I didn't want to have a rogue program here. Eventually – well, not even eventually, fairly soon thereafter – Mari asked me to send – he brought me a letter for Baker, so I had to fax it. He wanted me to fax it from Helsinki because he couldn't do that from Tallinn to the State Department. So I would fax the messages from him through the Op-center to Baker. None of which ever came back, by the way. Nothing ever came in the other direction, but that didn't seem to worry him too much. He would call me from his cell phone on the ferry boat, saying, "I'm about ten miles offshore now. Can I come by and see you at your office?" He'd have a message. He came by and he asked me if I could send the letter.

Obviously I kept in pretty close touch with our embassy – the front office of the embassy on all this – and introduced him to the ambassador and the DCM as well so that there would be a State Department connection into this. Because, remember, USIA is an independent agency there. I was quite aware of the fact that it would be a bit of a mess if it were seen that USIA was conducting its own foreign policy in the Baltics. In fact, I went over to visit Dick Miles a couple of times, both as a friend but also to discuss with him what we were doing and what we could do. He, in turn, I presume, discussed it with the Soviet desk and the embassy in Moscow. This was really quite unusual.

Q: How were we treating the – in the first place, in Finland, was it Gorby-mania or whatever was going on? Was Gorbachev seen as really a breath of fresh air or were the Finns more cautious about this?

KIEHL: I don't think there was the kind of demonstration that Gorby got in the U.S., for example, but the Finns saw this as a very positive development. In their way, in their analysis, there were many more Gorbachev's in Russia than what the United States would have guessed. There was a whole element within the Communist party of Russia that realized their system was bankrupt. There were those, who, like Gorbachev, wanted the Communist party to maintain control but to change with the time and become an adapted Communist party that would increase Russia's economic well-being and so on. There were other people, of course, that saw the bankruptcy of the whole system but they weren't in power. The Finns were in touch with all these kinds of people and told us about this. They told me about it and they certainly told other people about it as part of their analysis of what was happening in Russia because for them Russia was the whole world. That was the real focus. As sympathetic and as positively inclined as they were to the United States, their interests were really in Russia, not America. They wanted to be like America – in fact, the most common phrase that I heard in Finland, almost the

most common phrase was, “Finland is the most Americanized country in the world, or the most Americanized country in Europe.” They were proud of that fact – Americanized, not Finlandized.

I would ask them what they meant by that, initially, and they said, “Well, you know, we think like Americans do. The way we go about our business and the way our towns are organized and so on.” There were things called America Days in various towns where people would run about in old American cars and reminisce about the time they spent in America. So there’s the enormous kind of nostalgia about America and very positive influences. In fact, the University of Helsinki did a statistical breakdown – not only the University of Helsinki but all the Finnish universities – 90% of the entering class at all Finnish universities in 1990, I think it was, 90% of those entering freshman had spent a year in the United States under an exchange program.

Q: Was there a good course in the history of the United States and – I mean, universities – my experience in Western Europe is that – mine goes way back so I don’t know about it today, but a well-educated American knows a hell of a lot about Europe, the politics and...

KIEHL: Well, you can have European studies programs of various kinds.

Q: But a well-educated European, at least a long time ago, knew about the United States through war and movies and all that but really there weren’t very good American studies programs around.

KIEHL: Well, I think that in terms of American studies programs in Europe in general, Finland was probably one of the better ones, but it always disappointed me a bit. There was an annual conference called “The Eagle and the Maple Leaf” conference. It was North American studies, because the Finns were wise enough not to label something American studies or USA studies. It was North American studies, so they lumped Canada into it, too, although 99% of everything was American. Nevertheless, there was a Canadian element always introduced.

That was an annual conference and that brought in a lot of professors and it was a first-rate academic conference. We supported it, in fact. We had Fulbrighters – we had a senior Fulbrighter, with a special stipend, who got to live in Matti Atsari’s (future Finnish President) apartment. He rented his apartment to the Fulbright commission for that professor at the University of Helsinki. As far as American studies – it’s really the benchmark job, the top Fulbrighter in the country. There was an active American studies – North American studies – program at the University of Helsinki. There were some incipient ones in other places, notably in Turku, the Swedish university there. It was interesting that only – when I was there, there was a professor named Tom Wendell from San Jose, California, who was the thesis advisor for an academic named Marku Hendriksson, and he was the first one to have gotten a PhD in American studies and that was in my time. Until you have somebody with an indigenous PhD in American studies, you don’t really have an American studies program. So he was the first one, in 1990.

It needed infusions of money and it needed interest and so on, but it obviously was there. There was an American studies program. That’s more than you can say for much of Western Europe.

Q: Well, was there – what happened during the events in East Germany and all this? Did we do much on that or was this being covered sort of European wise anyway so we didn't have to – we were just sort of observers?

KIEHL: Finnish or ...

Q: Europe respectively.

KIEHL: I think it was a European issue. The U.S. didn't have to tell people what was happening, they had their own reporting going on. They had their own reporting on the changes in Russia, too. This is after my time in Finland but, as things escalated to Russia versus Soviet Union and literally, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Finns were certainly as aware of it as anybody in the United States was.

There were, I guess, two major – let's see. There were two organizations which played an incredibly important part in Finnish-U.S. relations. One was, as I mentioned, the Fulbright commission, ASAA Fulbright. I was chairman of that for a couple of years but it alternated between Americans and Finns. It was an enormously prestigious organization, a very important organization within Finland, not only in terms of the scholarships and so on, but also the student advising. The other was the Finnish-American society, which, as I mentioned, had 70,000 members who paid dues every year to be members. There was a large travel component to it, of course. They made their money, the association made a lot of money, as a travel agency. They had a monthly magazine which, of course, we could put a lot of material into. They did an annual event called America Days, which was an event that was organized by the Finnish American society. They would pick a different city in Finland each time and that chapter would host and people would come from all over Finland, the Finnish-Americans, and people from the embassy would come up and play an active part in this. It was full of social events and games and fun and all that sort of thing and usually some big name celebrity from the U.S. which we would help them get. Cliff Robertson one year, you know, P.T. 109.

Q: Talking about a movie actor who portrayed John F. Kennedy during the war.

KIEHL: Another time it was Roz Ridgeway, who was the former ambassador there but had gone on to be assistant secretary of state. She came back for one of these as well. It was a different personality each time. These were very important because they could result in a lot of positive publicity and energize a large number of people in different parts of Finland and it was a way of getting outreach in places outside Helsinki.

Q: Who paid for the 90% of the young people who went the United States to study for a year before going to university?

KIEHL: Believe it or not, the young peoples' parents, mainly, because most of it was under the AFS program.

Q: American Field Service ...

KIEHL: But it's now called AFS and it isn't specifically American anymore because they also have programs between European countries but it's still largely an American creation. Several of the other, smaller, lesser-known organizations – it was on almost any of the high school exchange lists, it was either in the top three or four for every organizations. The Finnish parents essentially picked up the tab. It worked very well in Finland for a couple of reasons. First of all, the kids knew English because they'd learn English from first grade on, or even preschool. So certainly the middle class kids could afford it, their parents could afford it. It wasn't that expensive. They were home-stays.

Q: They'd stay with American families.

KIEHL: Yes. And they would call them “Mom” and “Dad,” and their sister was their sister, their brother was their brother and it really – I met so many people who even many years after still thought in those terms. They weren't just fresh out of America. It's an extraordinary relationship that has been built through these programs. It is absolutely the best way to do it.

A lot of the Americans who would come to Finland – first of all, they couldn't speak Finnish, most of the time – certainly almost all the time. So they would come for a summer program. They had a good experience and they lived with a Finnish family for the summer which is the best time to be in Finland, after all, and that worked. The Finns would go to the United States when they graduated from their high school. They were already probably second year college students in terms of knowledge base and so on. What they did is they would take a year and they would do their senior year in an American high school, and they would have fun because they didn't really have to study much because they already knew this stuff. Then they'd graduate with the class, they'd have a senior prom, they'd do all the kind of extracurricular activities that don't exist in a Finnish high school. The relationships that they had with the Americans were just, almost universally, a very positive thing.

Then they would come back and they would finish their Finnish high school and go on to university and it was very important for Finns to be in the university because that determined the rest of their lives. So they would graduate from university, and if they wanted to go back to America they'd go back for a graduate degree but not for university. So you'd see all these kids going out there for high school, nobody going for college and then people going back, a significant number, going back for a masters or a PhD.

Q: I was wondering, in Finnish society, did it reflect – I've talked to people in Denmark and in Sweden and found them really these nice – they looked like friendly people, always smiling, but it was a pretty closed society. How about the Finns?

KIEHL: In perhaps small-town Finland it would be really closed, but then it's closed in American societies, too, in small towns. I'll tell you one thing that made a real impression on me. The first night we were in our house in Helsinki a neighbor came in and invited us across the street for a barbecue to meet all the other neighbors. They all arranged to have a barbecue in their place, right across the street from us, almost across the street, and brought in all the neighbors in the neighborhood. We all had drinks and barbecue and beautiful sunshine right on the Gulf of

Finland and got to know all these people on the first night. How many neighborhoods in America do you move into where somebody does that for you?

Q: Absolutely. No, I mean, it's a different society ...

KIEHL: These were not typical Finns, I have to say. These were upper-middle class or relatively well-off Finns. We were in a very fancy neighborhood.

Q: I've talked to people who've been in Denmark who say that they never really talked to the people in the same apartment house as them.

KIEHL: That's apartment house living, perhaps. In this suburban neighborhood, I can tell you – we were right on the Gulf of Finland, of course, it was an ideal place to be.

Q: How did the Gulf War I play – this is when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. How did that play in Finland?

KIEHL: Well, for part of the time I was the acting DCM. I think I was DCM for about eight months and so – Finland was very important in the Gulf War – in Gulf War I – particularly in the UN, because they were, for part of that time, president of the Security Council. So I think probably I had to make a demarche at least once a day about the entire damn thing, to the point where I'd come up and I'd say, "OK, well, here's the deal." We didn't want to waste anymore time here. This became so hum-drum, you might say.

Q: What were they concerned with?

KIEHL: No, they were very supportive.

Q: I mean, what were our demarches, what were we saying?

KIEHL: There's so many of them. We wanted their assistance in talking to some other people in Europe, in order to really – most of it was coalition building. The coalition building was meticulously done, from the perspective I had anyway.

Q: Thatcher and Bush made a wonderful coalition team.

KIEHL: Yes. That coalition team was assisted by lots of, shall we say, lower level people talking to Foreign ministries, particularly in Europe and the Middle East. That's what, basically, we were doing. We were encouraging the Finns, because the Finns had, early on, agreed to be helpful, and so, having made that commitment, we kept after them to do more, to do more, to do more. To talk to more people and to convince them of this or that. That's why I say I think I must have made a daily trip to the foreign ministry, although, as things got more set in concrete, the political section did most of it. It was only at the very beginning that it was at the front office level.

This was between Schnabel and Weinmann, the two ambassadors – Mike Durkee became the chargé and I became the DCM, and obviously he wasn't going to be running back and forth except on the most important things, so I got stuck with that. The Finns were extremely supportive from the very beginning. They saw their interests coinciding with U.S. interests, and they also saw that this was an opportunity for them to build a reputation with the American administration of being a good ally. They saw this as, obviously, in their best interests and did a very good job of it. This was about the time my wife joined the Foreign Service, went back for training in Washington, and then was assigned to London. So during the actual Gulf War, I was flying between Helsinki and London. By that time the new ambassador had come on board and Mike Durkee went back to being DCM and I was grateful to go back downtown again to my headquarters. I had a very good relationship with both ambassadors.

Ambassador Schnabel did something that – I shouldn't have been surprised, perhaps, because I knew him, but I was a little surprised. We were at a dinner hosted by the president of Finland, the Foreign minister and a whole gaggle of senior officials, to conclude the Year of Friendship. The foreign minister made a long and rather elaborate speech about Rock Schnabel and what a wonderful thing he had done with the National Year of Friendship with Finland. I was very supportive of that and I thought that was great. Then Schnabel did something that was very uncharacteristic. He said, "You know I really do appreciate your words and I'm very grateful, but the guy you should direct those words to is sitting right here. Bill Kiehl is the one who came up with this idea, he's the guy who put that whole program together for us. So please give him a round of applause." I was floored I have to say, because I've never seen an ambassador do that. That was pretty amazing.

Ambassador Weinmann was a different kind of personality and interesting in his own right and also very likeable. He was avuncular. He seemed much older – I mean, I'm about his age, I think, when he was ambassador, but he seemed a lot older. He was like an uncle or father figure to most of the officers there. He also didn't know too much about foreign policy and more or less followed the Schnabel model and said, "OK, you guys deal with this, just keep me in the loop." He was more socially oriented and he entertained well, he and his wife entertained well, and they were close friends of the Bushes. He was appointed to this job after being the big fundraiser in Louisiana. He was Commissioner of the international fair there and had some interest in international affairs. He's the one who later became chief of protocol when Ambassador Reid – I think his comedown was the "talking hat" for the queen if you remember. That was the final straw or something. Ambassador Weinmann took over that job in 1991.

Q: You might explain the talking hat.

KIEHL: The talking hat. The queen came to visit the president and they set the podium for the president, meaning it was a high podium without a little step underneath, for the queen, so the queen began to talk and the only thing you could see was a hat. That didn't sit too well with the Brits and it didn't sit too well with the president and the then chief of protocol took the hit for that one. There were a couple of instances prior to that which put him in a little hot water and so this was the tipping point, you might say. Ambassador Weinmann went back to Washington to take that job and I think that's a job he really loved because he loved to entertain people, he

loved to meet people, and show them things and be a good host and his wife was a wonderful hostess. So he was probably completely in his element at the Blair House.

Q: Were the Finns sort of stopped in their tracks by the war as portrayed on CNN, because I've talked to people in African countries – I mean, you know, everybody watched the war.

KIEHL: It was the major thing on TV. It was the show of the century, at least up until that time, certainly the most covered war in history and people in Finland were just as interested as anywhere else, and, of course, they also felt a part of it, because they were “an important country” in this whole thing. That's something that the Finns really relished.

Q: Did the Finns contribute at all to, I mean, not just this, but were they part of some internal peacekeeping and things like this, was this – or did they stay out of that sort of thing?

KIEHL: No, they were involved in that. The Finns are one of the countries that one always thinks of in terms of peacekeeping operations. They are extremely well-trained as a military. They're very good war fighters, probably, although they haven't fought any wars recently, but they're very highly trained. They're very tough. They train them with a rigor that matches the best in the world. Their real specialty has been peacekeeping, particularly in the developing world for the UN. They tend to see their role as peacekeepers within a UN context, blue helmet kind of peacekeepers, rather than freelance peacekeepers, you might say, much as the U.S. has become.

They were supportive not only diplomatically but in material ways to the war in the Gulf, the first war. One of the things that struck me as I was making these trips back to London. About once a – I had this deal worked out with Ambassador Weinmann, I had a lot of leave. Use it or lose it leave – I had tons of it because I hadn't been able to take that time at all when I was DCM. He thought pretty highly of me, I'm pretty sure he did, and so he was also a very family-oriented guy. As I had mentioned, he was avuncular, but – family, to him, was the most important thing and he brought that sense of family to the embassy community and did a lot of family get-togethers at the residence and so on. So he was very much inclined for me to see my wife occasionally. So the deal was I could take a week a month off during that period and go to London, no problem. This was great for my IO, she became acting PAO once a month, so it helped her career.. I would get on Finn Air and I think we got a discounted rate. I planned ahead. I'd get on the plane and there were four people on the whole flight. That's the thing that really was amazing about the period up to the war and through the war, the lack of travel. Not only Americans going to Europe, which was, of course, a tremendous blow to the American airline industry, but inter-European flights were empty. So much so that after about the third flight it was, “Oh, Mr. Kiehl, would you like your usual seat?” I'd get off at Heathrow and there was no line. When you get off at Heathrow and there's no line you can't believe it.

I'd get on the train into town from the Heathrow station and there were almost no people on the cars. There were, of course, sniffer-dogs going around for bombs. So the climate of fear in Europe was enormous, to the point where travel, inter-European travel, almost didn't exist. Which I thought was amazing. Of course, I'd get to London and I had the perfect – but I'll tell

you about that when we get into that section. Maybe I should tell you about this part, because this is part of Helsinki.

The great thing about this was – and I had no reason to believe that I was going to be assigned to the embassy in London after that – but I was there for a week, my wife was working in the consular section at the time. While she worked during the week, I set off on foot all over London, all day, eating in little pubs and talking to people and taking buses and the tube and so on, but walking a lot. I had guidebooks, so I'd follow various walking tours, and in the evening I would meet her at the embassy and we'd go off and see a play and have dinner, meet some people and go out to dinner or something, and had a normal evening. They next day I'd continue this again, for a week, and then I'd go back to Helsinki. It was absolutely the best prep for serving in London because there were people who'd been in the embassy three years, the day I arrived and I knew more about London than they did. It was enormously helpful to my work and our lives to have that opportunity. It's a wonderful opportunity, and I had no idea that it would work out that way.

So back to Helsinki--- The Finns, in many ways, are like Americans, and one thing that they differ from most Europeans – they're very supportive of the military, whether it's their military or military operations that they consider in their interest. They're very supportive. You don't find that so much with Western Europeans. The military is something outside of life. Whereas, for the Finns, it is still, because so many Finns – they had a conscription system, and the Finns are – I think they may still have it. It's not something that most people knew about outside of Finland. That is, that they would have training sessions for people in the media, for people in government, for people in key industry positions and commercial positions, almost like military training, in case of emergency. So it was always in the back of their mind that they would be invaded and everybody would know exactly what to do. They kept up this training for people. I mean, there were people who'd been doing this for 30 or 40-some years. It was a country that was always in a state of readiness.

Q: Switzerland comes to mind.

KIEHL: Switzerland is another place that has that citizen military. Of course, the Finns have a regular military and that is a prestigious job in Finland, but everybody knows their role, which is something that's quite unlike most of Europe.

Q: You were there when Germany united. How did the Finns react to this? This is a big neighbor to the south – I mean, all of a sudden you've got a whole Germany. Did that make much of an impression?

KIEHL: It did. It made a big impression all over Europe. I think they were a little wary at first. Small countries don't like changes that they don't anticipate and I don't think anybody really anticipated this. Certainly the Finns didn't seem to. They were pretty wary at first but then, in general, they were positive about it. They were really concerned about how Russia would react. Germany is a little too far away to worry about it too much although there was a lot of sympathy for Germany in Finland. You recall that the Finns were on Germany's side in World War II. There are a significant number of Germans who have become Finns. There was an immigration,

particularly in commercial areas, of business people from Germany, who immigrated to Finland to set up businesses and so on back in the 19th century and Finlandized or Swedofied their names and fit in. They were no longer German but their ancestry is German and they probably had some tug that way. A lot of them are fairly influential people. So there's a lot of interest in Germany.

It's also a big market for Finland. It's not as big as Russia but it was a big market. So they were concerned about that, but basically they were positive, and yet they were wary of, first of all, the change, but most importantly, the way the Russians would react. Would the Russians tolerate this? How would Russia cope with it? I don't think – there was nobody in Finland that I can recall either hearing or reading, who was a soothsayer about what happened to Russia. I think they saw Russia – or the Soviet Union – evolving slowly in kind of a Gorbachevian way, not the complete breakdown of the Soviet states.

Q: Was there a certain amount of contempt for the Russians or not?

KIEHL: There was contempt, particularly the Karelians, who were displaced and so on. There's no question that there were people who hated Russia, but they weren't very vocal about it. It wasn't considered proper to do that. There was a certain amount of pity for the Russians because the state of their state, the economy was so bad and so on. Most Finns really, I think, would have been quite happy to have the Soviet Union continuing to weaken in a non-belligerent way, and continue to provide the market for all the Finnish goods, because when it did happen, when the Soviet Union did implode, Finland's economy was ruined. It was an enormous economic blow to Finland. They could no longer sell shoes to Russia. They couldn't sell shoes on the open market, because what they did was they worked out an elaborate system with the Soviet Union of barter, to keep unprofitable Finnish industries continuing to produce clothing, or tuxedos – they were the largest producers of tuxedos, all of which went to Russia, or the Soviet Union, in exchange for oil or some other good. It was all a barter arrangement. Raw material from Russia would come to Finland – some of which would be resold at a profit – for goods that couldn't be sold on the open market because they wouldn't be competitively priced. So the Finns really had a great deal going there. Economically, they were taking the Russians over, but it served Russia's purposes and it also, definitely, served Finland's purpose.

When that chain was broken, Finland suddenly discovered that it was producing 50,000 tuxedos a month that nobody wanted to buy at those prices, or shoes, or widgets, or whatever. There was a real economic downturn in Finland and huge unemployment. The Finmark fell like a rock. It took them several years to turn the corner, it was probably the perfect time to buy Nokia stock but I didn't do it.

Q: Did you find, in your work, that the – I mean, you say Finland is a great listening post. How did you, USIA, interface with CIA? Was this a problem or not?

KIEHL: >From my perspective we should not interface except in the country team, as being a colleague. USIA has always tried to keep the intelligence end of government as far away from us as possible – again, the credibility factor being so important. I had an extremely good relationship with the first station chief up there. He understood exactly what we were all about

and we understood that he didn't need us and we didn't need him, but we had a good, cordial relationship, and with several of his officers, who were very bright, Finnish-speakers, and so on, who are still friends. The second guy came out of Africa and had no European experience, not East European experience, and, I think, didn't understand things as well. He may have been brilliant at what he did but I don't know. He got a very ostentatious apartment, gigantic place – it was just over-the-top. I noticed that some of the newer people that he had brought on board were problems. –There were a couple of occasions. One guy tried to pass himself off as a cultural affairs officer on several trips in northern Finland, and I warned them not to use that cover story ever. Of course he was allegedly in the Econ Section. It was too transparent and stupid. I said to the new station chief, "Not only is he blowing his own cover he's damaging us. If it happens again I'm going to the ambassador about it. Just be forewarned."

This same guy did a couple of things like that. I learned – there was an Estonian guy who came to me and said, "Oh, I guess So-and-so works for you." I said, "Who? Why do you say that?" He said, "Well, he gave me the impression he worked for you at the America Center." I said, "No, but he's a new officer and he probably rotates around a lot," and then I went back and I said, "For God's sake, I'm telling you, this is going to be a real problem if this guy isn't reined in." He then showed up at our annual Christmas party, even though he wasn't invited. So I took him aside and I said, "You get your ass out of here right now. I don't want to see you near our contacts again." He did, and then his boss got all huffy about it and I had a face-to-face with him and that was the end of it. I don't know what they were up to. I knew they were behind the curve. The CIA were really behind the curve on the whole Estonian thing and they were trying to make up for lost time and they knew we had close contacts with them. Therefore, they were just trying to catch up - clumsily.

Q: Well, at a time – I don't know how it works now, but – it was more or less like insurance salesman. You had to go out and make so many contacts and you got paid per contact, or credit per contact.

KIEHL: That's fine, and the Young CIA officer could be an econ officer doing environmental reporting. It was just an innocuous and he could have done it, and especially after having been warned by me once not to use us for cover, because that was just – it's so deeply ingrained in the USIA people, not to get too chummy with intelligence people, that I was just absolutely off the wall.

Q: It's bad show.

KIEHL: Very bad show. I expected, and I think I was proven correct in my discussion with the station chief, that the station chief encouraged this kind of activity. Maybe he could get away with that kind of sloppy work in Africa but he wasn't going to get away with it in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe.

Q: During this period, were you seeing the rise of communications technology?

KIEHL: Oh, yes.

Q: How did that have an impact on you? We're talking about phones, computers, faxes – the whole thing, but much more ...

KIEHL: The first cell phone I ever used, or ever had as my own, was in my car in Finland. When I arrived in Helsinki, every car in the embassy motor pool – and the USIS motor pool of two cars – was equipped with a cell phone. Before the Reagan visit we all got cell phones that were the size and shape of a brick – Nokia phones – with an antennae about a foot long. And they were a little clumsy and heavy but they were cell phones, and we were the envy of the White House advance people because we could call anybody from wherever we were, and they had to go through their stupid radios. You didn't have this in the states. Everybody who came out said, "What's that? Oh, what? A cell phone?"

We had plain-paper fax before anybody ever heard of it in the states. Finland was a society – and it still is – the most wired society in Europe. That was certainly the case in 1987. People had cell phones-- a lot of people had cell phones. Plain paper faxes, the PC, which we had. We had personal computers.

Q: I'm really thinking about our communications. Had the communications revolution hit your contacts with USIA headquarters, or were you – I mean, was there much direction, suggestion, consultation, or did you kind of do your own thing?

KIEHL: We pretty much did our own thing. There wasn't much – WorldNet, of course, was started out of Washington, but, by and large, posts like Helsinki were way ahead of what Washington was even thinking. For example, we did video conferences between Helsinki and Stockholm using the PTTs [Post, Telephone & Telegraph]. They would let us do it for free because they were experimenting with this technology. It was black and white, but it was pretty good. It was about the same as it is today, otherwise. For example, I would get Jack Matlock, who was ambassador in Moscow, he would come out to Helsinki like everybody else would, get the pressure off a little bit, and I would prevail upon him to do a video conference from Helsinki with Swedish journalists sitting in Stockholm. Even Charlie Wick, when he visited Stockholm, he wasn't able to visit us that time, which was a mixed blessing to be sure. He was in Stockholm, so my American staff and I sat in PTT in Helsinki to chat with him, and for whatever reason, I just had this little devil pop in my head, because we had experimented with this so much, and I said to the PTT guy, "Can you make my picture twice the size of his on the screen." "Oh, yes, sure." I said, "Do that." So we're on the conference, we're doing this dialogue, and I'm big head here and Charlie Wick's little head there. As we closed off – we say goodbye and so on – we could still hear the audio on the other end, and there's Charlie Wick saying, "Why the hell was his head so goddamn much bigger than mine?" We all just choked. It was just so damn funny, because this was a guy who had an ego the size of Texas. Just for devilment I did that, because it was a little joke for us. We didn't actually think anything would come of it and it didn't, but he did blow his stack.

This kind of technology was going on between two posts in Europe when Washington wasn't even thinking in terms of videoconferencing. They were still doing "WorldNet dialogues", quote unquote, interview-type things.

Q: OK. Well, Bill, I think this is a good place to stop, and we can pick up – we're basically finished off nicely, I have something else to think about later on about Finland, but you can talk about a couple trips you made, if you want ...

KIEHL: Sure. I was in Estonia ...

Q: To Estonia, but really talking about – did you go to the 'Stans?

KIEHL: Yes. I went out to Uzbekistan and to Ukraine and I was going on to Vladivastok but I got another job in the meantime and I would have had to go Vladivastok in December, which would have been a bummer. Also the administration changed.

Q: OK, so we'll pick that up.

KIEHL: OK, great.

Q: Today is the 9th of January 2004. Bill, let's talk a bit about these trips. You've already talked about the Baltic things, but how were yanked off to go to Uzbekistan and the Ukraine?

KIEHL: Well, let me do a little side issue before we do that. Two of the big things that happened in the time I was in Helsinki were two big visits, one with Reagan and one with Bush I and Gorbachev. The first one was done by the Reagan advance team and we worked for about two months on getting that together, putting all the journalists out on a boat in the Baltic, a cruise boat, for hotel space. It was a monumental undertaking.

The second couldn't have been more different. There was about a week's notice for that one. That was in about September of – I would say probably '89. I was back home on leave for my birthday, September 1st, was having dinner with some relatives there, and after dinner we turned on the TV set for the news and there's George Bush standing up there, George Bush the first, standing up there in Maine with a seascape in the background, saying, "And I'm announcing that one week from today we will meet in Helsinki, Finland." And I said, "Holy hell. You watch, I'm going to get a phone call in a matter of minutes." Sure enough, I did. I got a phone call from White House advance, they had tracked me down after calling Helsinki and I had to drive down to Washington the next morning, got on a plane about two hours later, after some meetings with the White House press advance, and flew off to Helsinki. I came off the plane there, was greeted by the ambassador, and began work on this summit meeting.

What we did is we took a look – we, the Finns, and the Russians took a look at a recent Gorbachev visit. We looked at the Reagan visit. There was a Gorbachev visit the previous spring or thereabouts, and we took the two visits and we kind of merged them, and then flipped the deck a little bit to provide for a summit context and planned the whole thing, literally, in a week's time, which was in the world of U.S.-Soviet summit meetings, some kind of miracle.

Q: Probably it's the best way to do it.

KIEHL: It was absolutely the best way.

Q: There's too much time spent on these things.

KIEHL: There was no time to reverse decisions. No time to go back to Washington to micromanage the whole thing. It was a dream, it was the best visit I'd ever been involved in and I've done eight presidential visits in various countries and this was absolutely the best.

Q: Why the sudden visit? What was going on?

KIEHL: Well, in part,— again, it was all U.S.-Soviet relations, arms control based. But a window opened up on both leaders' schedules, because they could have done this all two months later, but they felt that it would give impetus to the furtherance of the negotiations. Both sides thought this would be the time to do it, and so it was kind of a lucky circumstance. Originally on the schedule – the next summit was going to be held in Moscow, with Bush going to Moscow, and I think Gorbachev had some internal political reasons why he didn't want a U.S. president coming to town. He was still – he was on pretty shaky ground at that time, with the hard-line elements within the Communist party who thought he was a lunatic or a traitor. So they looked around and they thought, “Well, where can we do this quickly?” and they both recognized that Finland was the ideal place, because it had happened before. The Finns were so damned efficient, and everything was laid out. They had had a recent visit there. The Reagan visit went stunningly well in the previous administration, Bush knew that. Bush himself had visited there as vice president, and Schultz had been back and forth so many times it was almost like you pressed the button and everything worked. So they figured it was one of the few places they could – other than one of the two capitals – where they could, first of all, control everything. The Finns were very good about not interfering in the process the way, perhaps, some other, larger, European countries would want to insert themselves into the puzzle, and secondly, they were so efficient knew it so well that it could be done in a week's time. It was one of the very few places that could actually pull that off. So they did it.

Q: How did you find, at that point, working with these two foreign powers, and I speak to them as being that kind of thing – our Secret Service and the Soviet counterpart?

KIEHL: Well, the KGB. I really had no problems with the Secret Service. Presidential visits are all wrapped up into two things. The two things that really are the essence of Presidential visits are security and media. That's what it's really all about. You want to have security, obviously, and you also want to get – you want to put the spin on it.

So Secret Service, while they almost always had the final call on everything, because nothing is more important than the president's security, generally speaking didn't interfere in the media end of things very much at all. The Soviets did it a little differently throughout the entire Soviet period, I'm talking about. Now, the Russians have actually had a lot of the same elements today, but there were two parts. We had, of course, Advance and Press Advance, and then there was a security advance, too. But the two – the top person was the head of the office of advance and the number two person was always the press advance person. So within press advance there was just

– they were just campaign people, basically. They knew how to run rah-rah rallies and things like that and they were generally pretty good at it.

Overall, the quality of people doing this work steadily declined. The Reagan people were absolutely top-notch pros. Then the Bush people came in and they were not quite as good, and the Clinton people were absolutely terrible, for whatever reason. We had one person on the – well, I’ll tell you later about that one, about the Clinton visit to Thailand. The press advance person was bouncing checks all over the country. It was just embarrassing.

Anyway, the Russians, they had their press advance, but they also had their press security, which is quite interesting. So there was a counterpart to the press advance person, who was the press security person, who was the KGB. They were responsible for press security, meaning, keeping an eye on the journalists, as opposed to protecting them. So it was really almost humorous, the way the press security guy was always inserting himself into the mix, and the press advance person was more like our press advance, saying, “OK, we want to maximize the exposure, we want to get this and this and this,” and the press security person was always trying to minimize things. He was more like the Secret Service than the Secret Service was. That’s an interesting aside.

Q: How did you find the press and all? I mean, did it work well?

KIEHL: Yes, it worked very smoothly in that one week. It was better – it was better in every way. When the Reagan visit happened, there was a lot of negative publicity. First of all, Reagan, much like Bush II, was seen in Europe as a cowboy, as irresponsible, quick-triggered, a unilateralist, et cetera. All of the things that you hear about Bush II now, you used to hear about Reagan twenty years ago. One of the things that the local anti-Reagan people in Finland had struck upon, as a great media gimmick, was they had all of their protestors dress up in Santa Claus outfits, which would guarantee media coverage, because you have protestors in front of any building or the motorcade or whatever. Journalists, being journalists, were drawn like moths to a flame with some guy dressed in a Santa Claus outfit, with a big sign, “Reagan is no Santa Claus,” or “Reagan is the Grinch that stole Christmas,” or whatever it happened to be. Of course they got tremendous amounts of publicity for that. It was a clever move on their part.

So the media for the Reagan visit was kind of mixed. The Gorbachev visit was – the Russians were not particularly adept at spin control, then or now, but Gorbachev was such a charismatic figure and the Gorbo-mania in the United States was not as pronounced as in Finland but there were an awful lot of people who saw in Gorbachev a Western-style leader for that monolith across the border. They were very positively inclined and the media painted him as saintly, almost.

Q: For these conferences, did the Finns turn out in good numbers? It always looked like the had a lot of people, that sort of thing.

KIEHL: Yes, but there weren’t so many public events, per se. The events were – I mean, obviously negotiation-type meetings, but there were also then some public events like in Finlandia Hall, a very much controlled situation with a VIP audience and television coverage and

so on, but a VIP audience of carefully screened people, for security reasons, and only 2,000 or 3,000 people in the hall. When motorcades went to the various sites and of course there were cheering crowds with flags and that sort of thing.

Q: Who gave them the flags?

KIEHL: Well, the Finns, actually, provided the American and Russian and Finnish flags. There were always three flags there. The Finns were very good about this sort of thing. They were great marketing people, and so – I still have, I believe, in fact, I'm sure I have, two umbrellas, one of which is for the Gorbachev visit, with "Gorbachev visit to Finland," and then the dates and so on, and another one was the Reagan visit, and I think may have a summit umbrella as well. They'd give these umbrellas out to everybody –, but anybody involved in the visit would get an umbrella.

They also were very good with the press. They had, basically, unlimited vodka at the press hotels and little chocolates filled with Finlandia vodka and they tried to get these journalists as stewed as possible, I guess, because they saw it as a great opportunity to insert a little of Finland into the stories, for tourist purposes and national image-building and so on. They really pulled out all the stops. The journalists were uniformly pleased by their treatment in Finland on these visits. Even the Schultz visits, at a much lower level, with only 100 journalists there – in those days, of course, the secretary would travel with about 100 press, instead of the 30 or so that usually go now. When Reagan traveled, it was 300 or 400 traveling press, which steadily declined as the costs of these things have escalated and the fact that they don't really need to travel in the plane, they can make commercial arrangements and use local correspondents and stringers. News organizations are much more strapped today and so they've really cut back on that.

These things were real juggernauts, and the Fins did it probably as well as anybody. The Brits did a pretty good job, too. I was custodian of the Russians at the G-7 plus Russia plus one, in London, in '89. I went on TDY (Temporary Duty) from Helsinki and, of course, everybody got gold cufflinks and pen and pencil sets and little briefcases and all that sort of thing, and an enormous amount of food and drink for free at the press center. It was almost – it was really ostentatious. They must have spent a fortune on this stuff. And of course there were lots of touristy materials and so on, trying to influence the journalists to insert some nice words about the UK into their stories. They saw it as a – most countries do that, they see it as a great opportunity. I don't know what the plans are for the G-8 down in Charleston, or wherever that is, or Sea Island, Georgia, this year, but you can bet that the press will be wined and dined and probably given all sorts of little souvenirs, depending on the quality of the souvenirs, it could be anything from gold cufflinks to the pen and pencils, you know.

Q: Did you find – I mean, did you deal with American press?

KIEHL: On these trips, American, a third country, and Finnish, in Finland, or local, I should say, sure.

Q: How did you find them? Were they knowledgeable or were they feeding off each other, or ...

KIEHL: Well, there's a lot of that in any group. We'd always set up a press center for the White House press corps. They paid for it, they were charged the actual cost for the rental of the hotel ballroom and all the equipment that was put into it and that sort of thing. I don't think our salaries were charged to them, but we would set this whole thing up in consultation with the White House but of course, they didn't know, actually, especially the newer people, didn't know how to do it, so they said, "Well, how did you do it last time?" I said, "Don't worry-- we'll take care of it." So we got all the tables and chairs and, of course, there were certain news organizations that always got their reserved seats and they had their own special phones and that sort of thing. They all paid for this.

Of that group of, say, anywhere from 100 to 300 people sitting in that room, there were probably maybe 20 or 25 journalists that were the real powerhouses. Other people were there because their paper or their news station or their network or their magazine felt the need to have a byline, but they weren't really the top flight people. There were 20 or 25 really top flight people, and they were the ones that really got the access to the White House in addition to the from-the-podium kinds of things. They were the ones who always got called on for questioning, because they were the powerful media.

So there really were probably three classes of journalists. There were those powerhouses, there was everybody else, and then there were a few oddballs, who, for one reason or another, had managed to get in to the White House press accreditation process and stick there, and these were, sometimes, relics of the past, old journalists who just wouldn't fade away, who were working for small news services or their own news service. They were tolerated by the press, but, on occasion, the press really could be pretty mean when one or another of these older folks, who were on the margins of journalism, would be a little late for the bus, the journalists would say, "Just leave her behind, the hell with her," kind of thing. They could be quite cruel about it because they wanted to make it back to the hotel and file their story and somebody was delaying them. There was not much sympathy for someone who couldn't keep up with the crowd.

AUBREY HOOKS
Security and Cooperation in Europe
Helsinki (1992)

Ambassador Hooks was born and raised in South Carolina and educated at Brevard College and the University of South Carolina. He entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and served abroad in Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Ankara, Port au Prince, Tel Aviv, Rome, Helsinki and Harare. He also had several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC. In 1995 he was named United States Ambassador to the Republic of Congo at Brazzaville and served there until 1999. He subsequently served as Ambassador to Democratic Republic of the Congo (2001-2004); and as Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire from 2004 to 2007. Ambassador Hooks was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: The 'second basket' was what?

HOOKS: It was dealing with human rights issues.

Q: I would have thought the CSCE, all parts of the Helsinki Accords, there must have been very high morale because it was considered to be the key to the breaking up of the Soviet Bloc, wasn't it?

HOOKS: It is regarded as playing an important role in the political evolution of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union made certain commitments and they were challenged to respect those commitments. Traditionally these meetings had been the scene of confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, but at Helsinki we probably had more of a confrontation with the French than we had with the Russians.

The French had their own agenda, and that created all sorts of frictions in the European Union, because many EU countries were much more sympathetic to the US than they were to France. Once the EU reached a decision, it was very difficult to negotiate a common position in the larger CSCE forum because of the awkward decision-making process in the EU.

Q: OK, in your particular field, I would think we would all be singing out of the same hymn book on human rights and all.

HOOKS: On human rights there was less confrontation with the French. It was more on other security issues, military issues and so forth but on the human rights issue there was less friction.

Q: What were the problems with the French as you saw them?

HOOKS: I think the fundamental problem was that France was having difficulty adapting its position to an expanding and evolving Europe. As you know, France was one of the original six countries to form the European Community. After World War II, the Germans were basically looking for political cover and the French provided it. The French could do whatever they wanted to do and the Germans would pay. The French played an extremely strong role in the European Union. In fact they kept the Brits out. The Brits didn't want to go in originally, and when they finally decided they wanted to become members, de Gaulle said, "No, thank you." So the EU was really a French game. As the EU expanded, France's role was diluted and even more so with the reunification of Germany and Germany's willingness to be much more assertive than it was before.

So I think the French were trying to play a leadership role within the European Union and be the interlocutor with the United States. They were rather rigid at times and they were pedaling against history, because obviously history was evolving in another direction. The French wanted to maintain a distinctive European profile, independent of the United States, with France being the primary spokesperson. While there was no head-on confrontation on fundamental issues, there were constant frictions. We and the rest of the European Union spent more time trying to work with the French than we did with Russia. It was an interesting experience.

Q: What was your impression of a European organization? You know, everyone thinks about when Henry Kissinger said, “We got to take Europe into consideration. What telephone number shall I call?” Did you feel that Europe was really in favor of the CSCE thing coming together? Was this a real European, effective organization?

HOOKS: Even in those days it was clear the European Union was a very positive development in Europe and that it was growing in importance. While it is not going to be a United States of Europe, at least not in the foreseeable future, as the United States is here in America, it nevertheless was playing a very positive role in terms of economic engineering, in terms of political engineering, in terms of social engineering and forcing badly needed change on many countries, especially in Eastern Europe. We sometimes forget that it required the Federal Government in the United States to bring about the social and political engineering of the 1960s that was needed to respond to the civil rights movement.

Just think how East Europe has benefited from having so many of its regulations dealing with civil law, criminal law, human rights and economic issues radically reformed. Certainly Poland had to carry out badly needed reform in all those areas in order to qualify for membership in the European Union. If we thought we had a problem with the French, it was mild compared to the problem that the Scandinavians and the Brits had with the French in the framework of EU meetings. We all had to deal with the French in a certain way. EU members would sit for hours and hours and talk to the French, and it was basically the French against the rest of Europe.

Q: Did you get the feeling that you were watching the French learn to adjust to the fact that it was no longer going to be number one in Europe because the Germans up to then had sort of followed their initiative. Was this a growing pain?

HOOKS: I think it was a growing pain, yes. Anytime a person or a country is no longer number one, there is always a certain pain involved in that process. The French were going through a similar process in Africa, and it has been a painful process for the French and the Africans. I thought it was quite interesting what we saw during the second Gulf War when Chirac told the East Europeans, “You have missed an opportunity to shut up” because the Poles and others were quite supportive of the U.S. effort and against the French position. The French suddenly discovered to their surprise that many East Europeans saw the United States as the best guarantee of their security, not the European Union. There were economic and political benefits to being in the European Union, and each new member had its own ideas about the European Union. The Poles and other East Europeans were not prepared to just bow and scrape to the French. Relations within the European Union were changing. The French suddenly found they had to take the East Europeans into consideration, and it is a painful process for them.

ARMA JANE KARAER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Helsinki (1993-1996)

Arma Jane Karaer was born in Minnesota in 1941. She received her bachelor's degree from University of Minnesota and during this time also attended Osmania University in India. During her career she had positions in Australia, Zaire, Turkey, Pakistan, Swaziland, Finland, and ambassadorships to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Ambassador Karaer was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Anyway, your suspicion is that somebody in the director general's office was trying to manipulate things so that he or she could get the job.

KARAER: It certainly looked that way. They said that it was just coincidental that it had come up like that, but the fact that they had immediately whisked me off the list for Helsinki, but left me on for Cameroon, I thought was indicative of bad faith. Anyway, this was going to be my first time in Europe although I of course had tours in Turkey. I went with a little bit of trepidation, because I had worked in EUR when John Kelly was the senior deputy. John had a reputation for having an extraordinarily short fuse.

Q: Yes.

KARAER: But, I was assured by the man I was replacing that he had mellowed considerably. He was right. I had an extraordinary experience from the point of view of learning to run an embassy from working in Helsinki. For the first half of my three-year tour I worked for John Kelly who was the quintessential professional. After John left, the Clinton administration appointed a man named Derek Shearer, who was a professor at Occidental College in California, to be the next ambassador. Derek is a genuine FOB (Friend of Bill) and had worked on Clinton's previous campaigns, including the campaign that elected him. I think Derek was a good example of how a political appointee can do well in an embassy. He let the Foreign Service people do their jobs. At the same time, he used his connections both in academia and in the press to further U.S. policies in Finland. His brother is a journalist and their father was the original editor of Parade Magazine, so they had a lot of personal acquaintances among the top-level press. Derek used the people that he knew, "Come and stay with me in my beautiful house in Helsinki," and when they came they would get worked to death holding seminars. We used to laugh, because he'd bring all of these top bureaucrats or journalists or business people or whoever from the Finnish community over for a talk and a lunch, and then he'd hand out all kinds of articles that he'd had copied for background reading. He ran it just like a professor runs a seminar. He's a very charming man. Actually it worked out well. He had special contacts that a person who had spent their entire career in the Foreign Service wouldn't necessarily have, and at the same time he let each of us run our organizations the way our organizations expected them to be run. I worked really closely with the military attaches and with our USIS office on programs that supported our country program in Finland.

Q: Well, let's start, 1993 when you arrived, what was the political and sort of international system as regards Finland?

KARAER: Well, of course, now the Soviet Union was gone and the Finns found the international relations shoe on the other foot. During the Cold War they had been very careful not to offend the Soviet Union, but now Finland was in the ascendant in that relationship. By 1993, more and more Russians were coming into town looking for stuff to buy and Finns were exploring new business relationships with the Russians. They were the ones that had the goodies and the Russians didn't. At the same time, the Finnish economy was in very bad shape. Their unemployment rate was between 14% and 16%, really bad, but because of their very lavish social safety net, the impact of that kind of unemployment wasn't as apparent as it would have been in countries that didn't have so much unemployment insurance.

The reason that the Finnish economy was in such poor condition, was because prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, they had had a lot of trade with the Soviet Union, but it was barter trade. The Soviets would barter oil for Finnish manufactured goods, so Finland was making stuff that Finland shouldn't have made, like shirts and shoes, and it was not good quality stuff. As soon as the Soviet Union was finished, the barter trade was finished. The Finns couldn't sell those low quality consumer goods anywhere and those factories closed. Fortunately, Nokia was rising. Nokia was a company that had made a lot of stuff over the years, including rubber boots at one time, but by the 1990's, it was quickly developing a specialization in cellular telephones. It was an obvious focus for a country like Finland, with highly educated people who should be making high tech stuff.

It was hard for small businesses to get started again, even though there were obvious things to do that would meet the need from the former Soviet Union for goods and services, because the very social safety net that was rescuing the unemployed workers made it extraordinarily expensive to employ anybody. Employers were reluctant to hire people because they had to pay huge social security costs for every employee. This is the problem that most of Europe has, finding a balance between their preferred social safety net and creating jobs.

We had two major issues that we worked on. One was to work with and through the Finns to persuade the Russians to be good neighbors. For example, both we and the Finns wanted them out of the Baltic States sooner rather than later. Getting the word on this from the Finns was easier on the Russians than having to deal with us directly. We were also trying to persuade the Finns, who were seriously thinking of joining the European Union, to join NATO. All through the Cold War, the United States was very popular with the Finn-on-the-street. In Finland, I found some of the most active American friendship associations that I ever found anywhere in the world. I think the Finnish American Society there did more square dancing than Americans do. As far as the teenagers went, the kids looked exactly like our kids, except maybe there were more Finns with spiky hair dyed green and fewer baggy pants. However, as far as policy was concerned, NATO was a dirty word for a lot of Finnish politicians and journalists.

We had a great program that was funded by the United States Information Service and backed up by our military guys under which we took a couple of groups a year of Finnish military, bureaucrats and politicians on NATO tours. I was one of the escorts on one of those tours. We took them to be briefed by people in London and Belgium on NATO policy and organization, and, on the trip I participated in, we took them to Aviano Air Base, near Venice to see NATO in action. We and other NATO air forces were flying missions over Bosnia from there.

One of the things that we toured at Aviano was a UK AWACS. When we got back on the bus, one of the fellows from the Finnish Ministry of Defense was very impressed. He said, "Boy, I'd like to have one of those AWACS." I said, "I know how you can have a whole bunch of them." i.e., in NATO, those AWACS are for all the members. Only about a year before, the Finns had decided to buy a new generation of fighter aircraft and, although they had bids from the Russians, from the French, and Swedes, they chose McDonnell Douglas FA-18's, our naval fighters.

This decision was taken as a demonstration of their independence from the Russians. Following the purchase, we had people representing McDonnell Douglas in central Finland helping to supervise the assembly of the planes.

Q: In the first place, why was the bureaucracy and the media opposed to NATO had they been over the years come out of the left? I mean was this where they were coming from? Or was there a nationalist being neutral type thing, what was it?

KARAER: It was a neutral sort of thing and NATO was seen as unnecessarily poking the Soviet Union in the eye, and anything that made the Russians nervous made things difficult for the Finns. However, while the Finns were being very careful about joining an alliance that, from their point of view, might make them satellites of yet another great power, we were trying to figure out how to expand NATO without frightening the Russians too much. I remember once being at a dinner at the home of the Chinese DCM and having this passionate debate with the Polish DCM who wailed, "Oh, how could you betray us?" The Poles wanted immediate full NATO membership. We were offering an intermediate relationship, called Partnership for Peace. There were a lot of questions we needed to settle with the former Soviet Bloc countries before we could agree to full membership. Clearly they weren't able to uphold their membership economically, and I don't think we were sure that we could trust them not to provoke the Russians once they thought they had NATO's full protection.

It was fascinating reading the progress of this policy. We were opening up our NATO headquarters for visits not only from people like the Finns, but to the Russians as well, to try to get them to see that we were not threatening them, and apparently the Russians were amazed at what our capabilities were. Another thing that amazed me was the lack of Russian capability. We had been so fearful of them, and they were, in fact, a mess. For example, in order to get the Russians to move their troops out of the Baltic States, we needed to help them build places for these people and their families to live. Also, we and the Finns were concerned about the state of the Russian nuclear submarines and what leaky, horrible hulks they all were, together with our concerns about the state of their nuclear weapons, which were also leaky and dangerous. I remember sitting next to the Finnish army chief of staff at a dinner at the ambassador's and we were talking about how incapable the Russian military was in so many ways. I said, "These are the guys we were afraid of for so long?" He replied something along the lines that you have to be careful about kicking a bear. Nowadays, we're very critical of our intelligence agencies. They underestimated the Islamic militants, but they greatly overestimated Soviet capability.

Q: Nuclear weapons and they had a very good air force. It was not, even looking back on it. Well, now tell me, what was the sales pitch that you were giving and the ambassador was giving

for NATO at this time? Was this just sort of a convenient method under which all the armed forces would go so they could rationalize what they were doing for protection and protection against whom?

KARAER: We said that we no longer saw Russia as an enemy, but that Europe needed to have a defense system. This was the time when the French proposed that the EU should have its own defense program. We were concerned, because unless the EU put much more money into their military budgets than they had been willing to do since the end of the Second World War, they'd depend very heavily on us for intelligence and for transportation. We were not about to just say, "Okay, you can use our stuff and you can tell our units what to do." Nor did we want to see NATO fall apart and lose our influence on the continent. Clearly, the newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe were afraid of the Russians. We had to find a balance between reassuring them and making sure that the Russians, or anybody else who might have bad ideas, would have us to contend with if they tried anything. On the other hand, we didn't want to take these folks in wholesale, who, in their enthusiasm at now being free, would then start thumbing their noses at the Russians and causing unnecessary problems. Also, their economies were nowhere in a position to support a real contribution to NATO. If we weren't careful, we could end up having member countries that were likely to provoke some kind of military reaction on the part of the Russians, but wouldn't be able to do anything about it themselves if in fact they were crowded or attacked.

Q: Finland had been neutral and rather conveniently so for all of us. Was it any great push to bring Finland in or was this just sort of an after thought?

KARAER: I think that the fact that Finland had chosen our aircraft and that the government was promoting the idea of joining the EU were good progress for us. You may remember there was an election held during that period to see whether a number of countries wanted to join the EU and the only one that rejected it was Norway. You also have to remember that while the Finns were very careful about how they dealt with the Russians, they didn't like the Russians. People from the eastern part of Finland, which is called Karelia, believed that the Russians had taken and kept what should be part of the Finnish homeland.

Q: It did. Well, I mean I'm sure due to claims, but after the winter war, at the end of the winter war, they took Karelia up the peninsula.

KARAER: Yes, well, the thing was that the Finnish government did not want Karelia back, although there were Karelians who wanted it back. As the more level-headed often said, "Who wants more trees and a lot of poor people?" No, I'm afraid a lot of Finns thought of Russians in general as thugs and thieves. In small shops in Helsinki there would be signs in English that said, "No more than one Russian allowed inside at one time." The implication was that any Russian was a thief, so they only wanted one in the shop at a time so they could keep their eye on them.

On the other hand, Finns also have a very delicate relationship with the Swedes who were their imperial masters, before the Russians were their imperial master. Although there are Swedo-Finns, that is people whose mother tongue is Swedish, and the street signs in Helsinki are in both

languages, those who speak Swedish and have Swedish names definitely feel themselves second class citizens in Finland.

Of course we wanted to have the capability of these countries in our military protective umbrella over Europe. Visiting our military installations was wonderful for these guys. Once, we were at a queen's birthday celebration at the British embassy. The Finnish admiral had just that day returned from a NATO visit with our ambassador. They had visited an American aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean and had flown on F-18s. At that reception, the Admiral couldn't talk about anything else. It was like a little boy describing his first bicycle.

Q: Was the Soviet Baltic fleet doing anything in those days?

KARAER: Leaking.

Q: Well, I mean you looked blank at me. I take it was not.

KARAER: Another thing about the attitude of the Finns toward the Russians. When we mentioned to people in Helsinki that we were planning a holiday trip to St. Petersburg, we were warned to be careful. There are so many thieves, they said. If you're on the train, be sure to lock your compartment, because at night they'll gas you and rob you. It was the kind of stuff we used to hear about possibly happening to you in very Third World places. When we got to St. Petersburg we were absolutely enchanted. The Finns are great people, but they have a deserved reputation for being extremely noncommunicative. After a cocktail party in Finland, I'd come home feeling as though I'd been carrying bags of cement, because just getting people to make small talk was almost impossible in that country. They were very kind, if they saw that you needed help, they were right at your side to be as helpful as they could, but no chitchat. In fact, one Swedo-Finn told me that, "Finn-Finns think that we Swedo-Finns talk too much, and therefore we are untrustworthy." I guess that's part of the way you get brought up. In St. Petersburg, the Russians were chatty and jokey. The Russians were totally a different kind of personality.

We used to visit Tallinn. My husband made quite a few trips there. He is a great collector and he loves brass and copper, which comes from his Turkish heritage I guess. He discovered Orthodox crucifixes made of brass in the Tallinn antique shops. He collected a whole bunch of these things. I am sure he is the only Muslim on the face of the earth who has a collection of Orthodox crucifixes. He also bought some icons there. When we were in Russia they were selling things like that, but you could not take them out of Russia. You couldn't even take a samovar out of Russia. But the Estonians couldn't get rid of Russian stuff fast enough. We ended up with icons and crucifixes. My front room looks like an Orthodox chapel.

Q: Did you attempt the Finnish language?

KARAER: I did. If there is any language that is closer to a secret code than that one, I haven't run across it yet.

Q: Is there no relation to the Turkish language there?

KARAER: There is a surface similarity in that its built similarly to the Turkish language. Verb tenses are formed by putting endings on the verb root, for example. There is some, but not the same, vowel harmony that they have in Turkish. However, although for many years linguists thought that there was a relationship between the two languages, now they say they are totally different language groups.

Q: What about the media? How did you find the media there?

KARAER: Although I attempted to learn basic Finnish while I was working there, I did not read Finnish, and therefore, I only got the news as it was translated. We had a translator who would give the ambassador and me a summary of the press every morning. The press was good. It was certainly not hostile to the United States, and at that time it was almost totally taken up with their economic problems, as it should have been. I did not deal personally with many journalists, so I can't really tell you more than that. I did, however, have a chance to meet a number of Finnish female politicians, who were very interesting, and also bureaucrats, of course. While the Finns, like the other Nordic countries, had rules, laws, about getting more women into political parties and into the parliament and so on and they had many more in parliament than we do, still the bureaucracy did have a bias against women. I remember talking with a woman who was a political activist that sat on the board that picked people for the Finnish Foreign Service. She said they Board always worried about whether a woman would get married and leave. The same stuff that we had gone through quite a few years before.

Q: How about Finnish society were women getting married early, men dated, did they communicate with each other? You think of the people drinking a lot of vodka and sitting around in saunas or something like that.

KARAER: Oh, they did a lot of sitting around in saunas, all right, but not together. The men sit in their sauna and the girls sit in theirs. We were warned by Americans and Finns that drinking could get out of hand and that it was necessary to be careful if you were hosting a party. But I think the excessive drinking had gotten under control by the time we got there. Maybe because of the economy, people just couldn't afford to buy as much alcohol and certainly it was very heavily taxed there. Drinking was not something that you took up lightly in that country. On the other hand, they still celebrate Vappu.

Q: Midsummer's Night?

KARAER: No, Midsummer's Night is June 21. This event is in May. Usually the snow has melted by then, but it's cold and it's rainy. Everyone gathers in the middle of town and a lot of people drink all day (and night). Its fun to go down in the late afternoon and participate by just walking around. Some people wear masks. Students and people who have been students wear the white caps that students wear in Finland. It's a lot of fun until the people who just want fun go home and stay in the house and everybody else keeps drinking and things get a bit out of hand. Other than that celebration, I didn't see really any more excessive drinking there than I'd seen in the United States. I think folks were getting that in hand. A Finnish lady married to an American told us that the problem in the past was that people had had the attitude that if you opened a

bottle, and that was usually vodka, that you couldn't stop until you'd drunk the whole thing. I guess by the time I got there people had learned to put the cork back in.

Q: How about students? Was there much of a turn towards going to the United States to get educated? We'd had of course Minnesota is full of Finns and Wisconsin I guess people dealing with the wood work, the lumber industry, but I mean was there much of a cadre of Finns that had gone to college in the United States and come back?

KARAER: Well, there were. I don't remember it being as obvious as it was, say, when you met people who'd gone to college in the United States in places like Turkey or India, for example. Of course in Finland, if you can qualify to get into the university, you not only get a totally free education, but you also get a stipend. One Finnish man who was at a dinner party at my house said, "I don't know what our government thinks. My son (who was a college student) is moving out. He was living at home, but he discovered that he could get a bigger stipend if he lived on his own and so he's moving out and getting an apartment!" Of course when they joined the EU, then their students also had the option of studying anywhere in the European Union, and since most of them learn very good English as well as French or German before they get out of high school, they have the whole of Europe available to them.

Q: Were there any sort of anti-American movements or anything like that going on when you were there?

KARAER: If there were, they sure were quiet.

Q: How about guest workers? Did they have I know in Sweden they have quite a few people who come up from Yugoslavia and all working at the Saab factories and all that, did the Finns have this?

KARAER: No, but because even Finns couldn't get jobs then, it was not a particularly good place for immigrants. I wanted to tell you about saunas. It's a great institution, and it's very important to the Finns. There's something almost quasi-religious about saunas there, and it's a way that they entertain as well. I had a sauna on the grounds of the house that I lived in, which was right on the shore of the Baltic. If you wanted to, you could do the real Finn thing which was jump into the sea right from the sauna. Some of our neighbors did. I remember our kids saying when we would be canoeing in that area, they'd say, "Oh, Mommy, did you see that lady?" I said, "Don't look. Not supposed to look." I used my sauna, but I did not jump into the Baltic, both because I'm shy and because I'm a wuss. I couldn't stand such cold water. I understand that my predecessor used to entertain in a very Finnish style by having dinners to which he would invite only men. They would start with a sauna and come in to dinner afterward. Some of those same gentlemen who were on my guest list spoke fondly of those occasions, but I'm afraid I couldn't oblige them.

I remember once when the Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. William Owens, came to call on the Finns. The ambassador was out of town, and so I was the Admiral's host for everything together with the Finns. The last night that he was there was a dinner at my house. The previous night, his counterpart in the Finnish navy had entertained him. They have their

military academy on an island right off of the city of Helsinki and they had a stag dinner there. When he and his wife arrived at my house the next evening, he told me that the night before they'd done the sauna thing. He said, "Then everybody got up and ran across the lawn and jumped into the sea. We had to do it, too. While we were doing this, a tour boat was going by." Clearly the Americans were embarrassed and sure that every tourist in Helsinki had seen them naked. When the Finns arrived, I asked them about the tour boat. "Ah," said one Finn, "they didn't see anything."

During a visit by our Finnish desk officer, who was a woman, we were at the Ministry of Defense for a briefing, to be followed by a lunch. There were two Finnish women on the ministry staff who were also in the meeting. When the briefing was over, the host said, "Okay, you ladies do your sauna first and then we'll do ours and then we'll meet for lunch." We ladies looked at each other, and I said, "Fellows I'm sorry, this is the middle of the day, we can't do a sauna now." "Oh, but you know it's the Finnish thing." "We know and we understand and we can't." The other ladies said, "We'll go and have a tea or something and you guys go and do your thing." After the men left, the Finnish women said, "They don't understand that it's different for us." The Finnish women like to have their saunas as much as anybody else, but if women have to sit there in the heat with their hair uncurling and then dress up in their business clothes again and continue with the day, it just doesn't work.

Q: How about the political system there? Was this anything of interest to us other than the usual watching brief?

KARAER: Yes, since there were no political parties that were a problem for the United States, the most interesting thing that happened politically while we were there was that the woman who was the Minister of Defense ran for Prime Minister in that election. She was a Swedo- Finn. We thought that while she was personally popular and a very talented woman, that she couldn't expect to get much of a return because of her ethnic background. Well, were we ever wrong. She got the second highest number of votes in the election. The Finns surprised themselves, too. The younger generation in Finland apparently didn't care that much about ethnic differences anymore. They were more concerned about a candidate's general political position than they were about who the candidate's grandfather was.

Q: Yes. What about how did you find the Finns looking at I don't know whether it was part of the European Community or the European Union because there were rumblings at this time about the bureaucracy which has only gotten worse as far as rules and regulations and all this which made some countries a little bit hesitant to get involved in this.

KARAER: Oh, no, membership was very important to the Finns because of the trade advantages to being in the European Union. Of course, it must have really been fun for the European Union to have to get Finnish translators. No, the people supported it in the referendum and the government certainly was in favor of it.

Q: Was there any or much interest from the United States in Finland? In other words, did you have people from the European bureau or elsewhere quizzing you?

KARAER: No. What we wanted was the help of the Finns. You mentioned before about how we had found their neutrality useful. Well, certainly their contacts with the Russians were still considered useful, and Helsinki had been the site of a number of high level....

Q: The Helsinki Accords were very important.

KARAER: Yes. Shortly after I arrived in Helsinki, they were having the tenth reunion meeting of the Helsinki Accords. But we have also had high level meetings between US and Russian presidents and foreign ministers in Helsinki. While I was there, Warren Christopher met with the Russian foreign minister. It was neutral ground where you could have a meeting at short notice, something that wasn't planned months in advance.

There's a wonderful, true story about the meeting between President Bush, Sr. and Gorbachev. First, let me give you an idea about the difference between the way the Finnish government works and the way we do things. At the time of story, the President of Finland lived in a small "palace" in the middle of town near the water. He also had his offices and reception rooms in that palace, as well as his private quarters. The Finnish President's aide told me that one Sunday morning, the telephone rang in the President's office. There was nobody else there except the president, so he picked up the phone and said hello. On the other end of the line was a U.S. army communications sergeant calling from the White House. He asked if this was the office of the president of Finland. Yes it was. Well, he was calling to alert the president's office that the President of the United States was planning to call the President of Finland at such and such hour later in the day and would the President be available to speak with him? The President of Finland said, "Well, yes, he'll be available." Bush was calling to ask if Finland would host him and Gorbachev. The Finns are friendly and accommodating, but they are firm. When I was involved in making the arrangements for the Warren Christopher visit, we had to talk to the Helsinki security chief. He was very courteous, but he made it very clear right away that the Finns would provide security and the Finns would run the security, full stop. Like it or lump it. Apparently there had been a real to-do between the Secret Service and the Finnish police during the Bush, Sr. visit, and the Finnish police were still smarting from being told they had to just get out of the way and let the Secret Service do their thing.

The other thing that we depended on all the Nordic countries for was that every time we had a favorite cause that we needed extra money for, they were on the top of the list. The demarche would arrive. You'd go in and ask them to support the Palestinians or the Rwandans or whoever. It seems that I was in there almost every week asking for money. When John Kelly was ambassador, John made the demarches, and I went along as his note taker. John never put up with anybody's secretary telling him that she wasn't sure if he could get in right away. John's response was, "This is the American Embassy calling. Do you understand that?" And he got in. John's wife is Finnish, a lovely lady and I'm sure one of the main reasons that if he calmed down at all it was due to her. He could get very steely, very fast. Ambassador Shearer, on the other hand, was a professor who liked to persuade and educate, but he was not into demarches. I don't think he ever came across a demarche that he liked. He did one, and he was extraordinarily uncomfortable. After that he had me do them.

Q: Did Finland have an active program in Africa?

KARAER: They did. Like the other Nordic countries they contributed quite a respectable portion of their national income to relief and assistance to Third World countries. I remember sitting in their AID office waiting to make one of my countless demarches and reading about their different projects, so they definitely were active there, too.

Q: How about communications in this period of time? Was the embassy closely connected to Washington by this time through faxes, telephones, e-mails, that sort of thing?

KARAER: Yes, we had all the modern stuff there. We also had a big warehouse operation from which secure building materials and furnishings for the embassies we were building in the former Soviet Union countries could be shipped. These warehouses were on the other side of town from the Embassy. Just before I left Helsinki, the person who was in charge of those warehouses was transferred and needed to be replaced. The Department ordered us to take a blind officer. We protested. The main responsibility of that officer was to insure that the warehouses were secure. We had contract guards there, but the warehouse manager had to insure that no one who had access to those buildings was risking their security. It seemed to us that that officer had to be able to see what was going on. We eventually learned that other embassies had already refused to take this officer, other embassies with more clout with PER, I guess, because by the time the assignment got to Helsinki, the Department wouldn't take no for an answer. I left there being feeling very badly about the situation that our admin officer was left in, because if something went wrong in one of those warehouses, it would be the admin officer and the DCM who would be held responsible, not the personnel officer in Washington, and not this hapless officer who was sent there without the ability to actually do the job that they were supposed to do.

Later on, when I was in ambassador's training, and the personnel people were doing their pitch, saying how closely they worked with the ambassadors to get the kind of people they needed, I demurred, and cited the case in Helsinki. Later on, while I was in Port Moresby, the blind officer filed a grievance against the poor admin officer for limiting the other officer's opportunity to perform. The embassy apparently had had a problem because the blind officer had to rely on a contract person to read, and the officer had given the contractor access to the APO mail, which was illegal. The Department asked me to comment on the situation, since, according to them, I had been DCM in Helsinki during this problem. I explained that this person hadn't even arrived in Helsinki before I left, but I can tell you that the admin officer is a very capable man and both of us had tried to tell the Department that the job they were insisting on sending this officer to was not appropriate for a person with that kind of handicap. I said that blaming the admin officer was not fair, and that I hoped that the Department would take its responsibilities, belatedly, in this case.

Q: I'm sure the Department stood up firm and strong. We're both laughing. Well, then you left there. It sounds like a very interesting and good time.

KARAER: Oh, let me tell you about one other thing that we did there.

Q: Sure.

KARAER: Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Department had begun asking us to make an occasional joint demarche with our Russian colleagues. Since we were supposed to now work with these fellows, I thought it would be a good idea to get to know them better, as we did with our other colleagues. I already had introduced myself to the Russian DCM, and checked to make sure that he was in fact an honest to God diplomat and not a...

Q: KGB type.

KARAER: ... KGB guy. After my political officer, economic officer and I had made some of these joint demarches, I asked John Kelly if he would have any objection if I invited the Russian DCM, political counselor and economic counselor to a lunch at my house and have my two colleagues, the political counselor and the economic counselor join us there. He said, no, that would be great. We invited them and the idea was to convey the idea that now that our governments asking us to work together, let's have some normal collegial contact the way we do with the Germans or the British. I mean we didn't say that to them in so many words, but that was the point of this thing. Of course the minute that the word got out in the embassy that this lunch had been arranged, another colleague showed up in my office and said, "You've got to let me come, too." I said, "No, I'm not going to let you come, too because I really have issued this thing in good faith." He said, "Well, their economic counselor, we think he's KGB." I said, "He may be. We'll keep that in mind when we're talking to him, but if they're cheating, we're not going to cheat on this. This is going to be just us." It didn't make me very popular for a couple of days, but that was okay.

Q: Did the weather bother you there, the long winters and darkness?

KARAER: Not at all, but then I grew up in Minnesota. Minnesota is still considerably further south than Helsinki, but I was used to long gloomy days during the winter. I think for those of us who were working the weather didn't make that much difference. I hardly had a chance to look up from my desk anyway. It didn't make any difference whether the sun was shining or not. I think that the people in the embassy community who were bothered by the dark winter were the spouses. Not mine, he was too busy bopping around, but some of the wives said that they were bothered by it.

However, used to it or not, everyone celebrated the return of the sun. I had a chance to go to a midsummer's celebration. I think it was my second year there. The summer solstice, the longest day of the year is the 21st of June. At that time it still is coolish and rainy in Finland, but if it's going to be a decent summer, its getting warmer. I remember my mother was visiting me and the plan was to go out to an island near our house where one of the big public midsummer celebrations was being held. From what I knew about it, there was going to be a big bonfire. I knew people would do folk dancing and stuff like that. That day it rained on and off. We kept changing our minds, are we going to go, aren't we going to go? Finally, as evening came on, I said, the heck with this, it's stopped raining now, let's go and take our chances. I'm so glad we did, because I never would have understood. I thought that the midsummer holiday was an excuse for a picnic, like the 4th of July is for the United States, but it's much more than that for the Finns. As the sun was going, well, the sun doesn't go down then, but it was dimming. They

lit this big bonfire on the lake, and the people all stood around the edge of the shore and they sort of linked arms and they started singing. They were singing in Finnish, so I don't know the songs, but they were obviously special midsummer songs and this was something really deep in the Finnish soul. I'm sure that before the people in that part of the world became Christians, this was a major thing, just like the celebration that they had at the end of the year to bring back the sun. Well now the sun definitely had come back and it was going to be back with them for a while. It was quite something. It was like being at a picnic and at church at the same time.

PHILIPPE DU CHATEAU
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Helsinki, Finland (1995-1999)

Philippe du Chateau was born during World War II in Illinois. He attended Indiana University, Cornell University, Middlebury College, and Harvard University. Du Chateau was also a member of the United States Coast Guard and served in the Vietnam War. His career in government began in 1973 when he joined the USIA (United States Information Agency) and was relocated to the Soviet Union. While still in the USIA, he worked in Washington DC and shortly after joined the Foreign Service in 1979. Some of the locations he served at while in the Foreign Service include Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, Israel, Finland, and Washington DC. Du Chateau retired in 2004 while serving as Chief of the Board of Supervisors in the State Department.

Q: You were in Finland from when to when?

DU CHATEAU: Well, I left there in 1999, summer of 1999, so I was there from 1995 to 1999, another 4 year assignment.

Q: What was your job?

DU CHATEAU: I was PAO, public affairs officer.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

DU CHATEAU: Eric Edelman was the second one and the first one Derek Shearer. Derek Shearer had been there a year before I came and he was there at least two years while I was there, and then I was with Edelman two years, I think that's right, while I was there. Eric was there for a year after I left. I was there in Helsinki for four years and Edelman wanted me to stay for a 5th, but USIA would not allow it - probably all for the best. Anyhow, both were excellent, just wonderful people to work for, and their families were good to be around, too.

Q: What were the issues that particularly concerned us with Finland?

DU CHATEAU: Well, Finland at that time was concerned about joining the European Union, but not being a political officer or econ officer, that wasn't my issue. I recall some environmental or agricultural issues were there was no agreement. Of course I had to know what was going on, but no silly demarches for me. Actually, it was the one place I worked was where there were no real problems with the U.S. The Finns felt themselves to be very close to the US. One of my enjoyable jobs was to be in close contact with their Finnish-American society, for instance. Their annual meeting took me all around the country.

Both of my ambassadors were welcome everywhere. My office would arrange speaking events when the ambassador traveled, and normally I was the embassy officer who went along, just to be there. Shearer especially liked doing this, public speaking, so we would fly in the morning up to Rovaniemi for instance, visit people, do lunch, speak at the university, and fly to Helsinki in the evening. Edelman was less interested in speaking on the record, but he was excellent value for the Finnish press. He loved to speak on background. We went out at least once a week. Edelman was of special interest to the Finns because he had extensive experience in the Soviet Union.

Maybe what was best about these two ambassadors, neither wanted briefing notes or speech texts. Shearer liked to speak without notes, and he was good at it. Edelman mostly spoke on background, and he was good at that. It made for a very enjoyable, not-too-stressful, time.

I should mention that USIS Helsinki was perhaps unique among USIS posts. Maybe it still is, I don't know. Anyhow, we had the typical FSN staff working in the USIS office in the embassy, 4 or 5 Finns, but across town, three USIS Finns, professional reference librarians, were working in the Finnish National Library, in charge of the American section there.

What happened was that USIS Helsinki used to have its offices and lending library in space in an office building in central Helsinki near the train station. However, my predecessor had to close those offices and move into the embassy, where it was impossible to have a library open to the public. This was at the time when USIA was being forced to close libraries all over the world, which, in my opinion was really stupid, but nobody asked me.

Anyhow, my predecessor, Jeremy Curtin, made a real smart move, a bureaucratically brilliant move. He worked with the director of the Finnish National Library, and made an agreement by which our library would move into an adequate public space within the National Library. They provided us space, we paid the salaries of the three USIS reference librarians, and we agreed to maintain the collection, purchasing books as needed. Of course the agreement had to go through the Washington lawyers, and it did. The agreement was for 5 years, as I recall, to be looked at and renewed if both sides wanted. We renewed it while I was PAO. It was called the American Resource Center. I hope that it still exists, it was just such a wonderful idea, and it worked.

The two offices were closely linked by computer connection, which was cutting edge at the time, and of course we visited each other all the time. It worked, but maybe this could happen only in Finland, where the people feel such a close attachment to the U.S. I mean we had an American library in rooms in the Finnish National Library. Can you imagine the Finns having special rooms in the Library of Congress? It couldn't happen.

So from the public relations point of view, I walked into an ideal environment.

There were other reasons why this was my ideal job, just the best one I could have hoped for. Of course I was PAO, and it is always nice to be in charge, but that wasn't what we might call an unmitigated good, as I had to deal with all the problems. We'll get to those. But you know, this was Finland. My wife was born in Sweden, but as a girl she spent summers with relatives in Finland. My mother-in-law had moved back to Finland after her husband died. I had been going to the country since soon after we were married, for more than 20 years at this point. It wasn't home in the U.S., but it was very familiar, a place where my family and I felt very much at home, and even somewhat a part of the society.

The most difficult thing I had to do was deal with the threat of so-called consolidation with State. During this whole period in the mid-1990s - everybody's forgotten it now - but USIA was under a lot of pressure. It was being starved to death for money by Congress. It couldn't, in many ways, justify its existence outside the State Department - at least that was what some in Congress felt, Jesse Helms comes to mind. And so there was a lot of pressure to show that we were producing, we were getting results, and that we were doing things that couldn't be done if we were consolidated with State. How do you measure results in public opinion and prove that it couldn't be done in State? It's something we could not do, but that was a constant worry, always on my mind.

This was the time when we had supposedly won the Cold War, and so we no longer needed to worry about what the overseas public thought about the U.S. Well, anyhow that's what was said, that was the theory. We had to close libraries everywhere since supposedly they were a needless expense. The word library could no longer be used. Collections of books and magazines became resource centers, information resource centers. It was incredibly short sighted, and I guess when I think about it, I'm still a little bitter.

But anyhow, when I arrived at post, I already knew that I had to cut positions, which was reasonably easy to do, kind of. I got a cable giving me my new budget soon after I arrived. I think the staff looked at me as this new guy who was going to do horrible things, and maybe they were kind of right. Anyhow, for starters, I got lucky. There was an empty FSN slot, someone was leaving and had not been replaced. I gave up that slot immediately.

However, that wasn't sufficient, and it was clear that I had to cut another FSN slot, minimum, maybe more. I spent considerable time trying to think of a good solution that would not hurt someone, but I couldn't do it. Certainly I consulted with my deputy, the APAO Les McBee, who had been there for 2 or 3 years already. Eventually we agreed to cut the job of one of the most senior FSNs. Emotionally, this was rough, especially as that person had been with USIS Helsinki for many years, but functionally it made sense. But that was my introduction to being in charge, being PAO - I would have had to make these decisions by the end of the fiscal year, by the end of September 1995, after being there only 3 or 4 months.

Eventually I was able to save a lot of money in the budget. There were two American slots there in Helsinki in 1995, a PAO and an assistant public affairs officer. When Les McBee left on

rotation after my first year, in the summer of 1996, I cut the APAO position and that saved a lot of money, a lot of money. The expectation was that I would cut the local Finnish staff and keep the American slots to make life easy, but that was the last thing I wanted to do if we were to continue being an effective organization. It is true everywhere in the Foreign Service I think. The incoming Americans know nothing, it's the local staff that gets things done. The Americans gradually learn, and then they are transferred.

I had a terrific local national staff - they could do everything. Once again, like in the Ops Center or in the ACC Jerusalem, I got lucky. They were just so smart and so good and so inventive that I didn't have to do anything, I just kind of showed up for work.

And so I could cut the other American position and do the everyday work with the four or five Finnish USIS people in the embassy and nobody in Finland or in Washington noticed the difference in our effectiveness. The Resource Center had a well-defined job within the University library system, so I didn't worry about them much. I don't recall anything that I couldn't do after the USIS office downsized. It's later been added, that is, I heard that the APAO job's been added back, but then it's all part of State now.

So we made the immediate downsizing decisions by the end of that first fiscal year, and then came the U.S. government shutdown. Nobody remembers that little event now, but it was a disaster at the time. The biggest issue was salaries as other bills could float for a time, but people had to be paid, and we were told that we couldn't do that. Can you believe it? What stupidity. Anyhow, Les McBee left on vacation, and the FSNs went home. As everyone is paid for the two weeks of work already done, we had a little float, but I still recall the FSNs coming to me and explaining that they could not get Finnish government assistance. What were they to do? I had no answer. You know what a way to treat people who trust us. And then we know now how it all came out, but that sure wasn't obvious when all this serious silliness started. It was unfair to those who worked for us and trusted us.

The biggest event that I recall we had when I was there was a Clinton-Yeltsin summit meeting. It was arranged at the last minute, we only had two weeks or less notice. I don't recall the details, but for some reason Clinton couldn't travel to Moscow as planned. I remember that he hurt his foot, and probably other things were going on. Was Yeltsin healthy? I don't recall.

These meetings are a big deal, with lots of people involved. This was in early 1997, so I knew lots of people by now, I'd been in Helsinki a couple of years, and I was used to working alone. I got lots of help from other USIS posts. We brought people from London and I don't know where else to staff event sites like the President's house and the foreign press center, but basically it was just me and the wonderful FSN group that brought it off with no complaints from the very aggressive White House press person who was in charge overall of what we were doing. It was cold outside, which helped, and Helsinki is a compact city, which helped with logistics.

And so here I was, a so-called one-man shop, doing everything that's associated with a summit. It was interesting, but I got good help, we pulled it off. I didn't get much sleep, and I wouldn't want to do it again, and I have a picture of the president and my younger daughter at a press event.

Q: How was the Finnish press, media?

DU CHATEAU: Oh, they're wonderful. I was worked with the press all the time, they had easy access to me and my staff, especially my wonderful press person, Anne Laanti, and we had high credibility. I mentioned the great value they got out of the ambassadors I worked with. At that time we in USIA had a program, it was run out of USIS NATO, and we could bring groups of 5 or 6 to NATO for special briefings and then travel to related places in Europe. I would travel with the group just to make sure everything went well – and of course I made good contacts this way, too.

I did a number of these so-called NATO tours, sometimes with Parliament staff people and at least once with senior Finnish editors, both print and television. I remember on that trip we traveled to a forward UN base staffed by a Finnish contingent that was way up in northwestern Macedonia, overlooking Albania. This was before everything fell apart in that area.

We also had a very successful International Visitors program. This is the program where we send important people with little on the ground experience in the U.S. on a month long familiarization trip. The Washington office arranges appropriate accommodations and meetings. I guess the highest-ranking person we persuaded to travel was the Speaker of the Parliament, Riita Uosukainen. That she would find time for this trip gives you an idea of the effectiveness of our program, I guess.

Oh, yes, there's another person from my past, a Finn, who was incredibly helpful. I may have mentioned him earlier, but Yrjö Lansipuro was a correspondent for the leading Finnish radio and television outlet in Moscow, he was the bureau chief for YLE, all the time I was in Moscow. So naturally we got to know each other then, especially as I'm close to Finland, you might say, and he felt free to call me.

Anyhow, small world, small world, Yrjö was in charge of press for the Finnish Embassy in Washington when I was taking Finnish at FSI. He came over to talk to my class at FSI at least once, so we could practice our Finnish on someone not a teacher we saw each day.

And then I get to Helsinki, and Yrjö has been transferred back to be the director for press and culture for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We would never put someone who was not a career foreign service officer, but a journalist, a correspondent, in a post like this, but the Finns did it all the time, moving people from what I guess you would call the private sector into appropriate jobs in their foreign ministry and embassies abroad.

So here I was, with a good long working relationship to the head of my counterpart office in the MFA. How lucky can you get? I've thought about this a little, and I'm sure glad that I was able to work well with correspondents when I was in Moscow.

There is a Finnish-America Society that we worked with, very strong, well organized, all over the country. We would always go to their annual meetings, and the ambassador or DCM would give a speech.

This was as close to an ideal assignment as I could ever hope to have. I was in a place where I knew what was going on, I was familiar with the country, I had been visiting there for at least twenty years, I had relatives there, and I loved the cold weather and the Baltic at our front door.

Q: Were there any issues in Finland, particularly?

DU CHATEAU: I'm sure there were and I don't recall them. But this does remind me of something else which was important at the time, computers, the Internet, and the Web. This doesn't make any difference now, but it did in the mid 1990's, Finland was considered to be the most computer-savvy country in the world, the most connected to the Internet. I think Singapore was right up there, too. Everyone used cell phones. Banking was done online by computer. We Americans felt very provincial using a checkbook to pay bills.

Anyhow, while the rest of the embassy was playing with Wang word processing machines, we in USIS developed an internal network of first class computers. I remember when we first started using Windows, Microsoft had just developed it. Anyhow, we wanted to set up our own Web page, so we, the Finnish staff and I, took HTML courses, Photoshop courses, and had someone come in and design our web page and logo. We had an absolutely wonderful computer person in USIS, Kim Wilgren, and he loved to work with this stuff. He was good at it, too. He especially liked working with Linux, a computer system that was developed by a Finn about this time. So anyhow USIS Helsinki was out there on the web far ahead of other posts, and maybe ahead of USIA. We had an excellent Internet connection that Kim developed, and eventually we sold, or whatever the term is, access to it to the rest of the embassy.

I even traveled to a conference in Vienna to demo what we were doing for other posts. We were early in putting up a firewall to prevent hacking. I remember Kim coming in one day and showing me this new search engine with the funny name, Google.

But it wasn't all great. The embassy had an inspection, as I recall, maybe it was just a security inspection, anyhow, I got called in to the DCM because our computers were being used, massively, to access porn sites. It was quite embarrassing. Kim and I figured out that people who were in the building after hours, the Marines I suppose, were using our equipment. The problem was, none of us were using passwords, which we immediately started to do. It's hard to believe that we were so open and easy, but this was early days, and it never occurred to us that someone would use our computers.

I constantly wondered how long we would have this independence. I could see USIA in Washington trying to get some control, but it didn't happen while I was in Helsinki. Everything changed at consolidation in late 1999, of course, but we had fun and learned a lot at the time.

Consolidation was hard on the staff, and especially on Kim, who was used to working independently. That couldn't happen under State's communication section, so he quit and he's been working for private companies since. I think my other colleagues are still with USIS or retired by now.

Q: Do they still have a problem, as many Scandinavian countries have and Russia, of heavy drinking and alcoholism?

DU CHATEAU: When we were there, Finland was coming out of a terrible recession that was caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. It's thoroughly capitalist, but the Finnish economy had strong ties east for obvious reasons. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the Finnish economy went downhill really rapidly.

I greatly regret that I didn't have an awful lot of money handy at the time, because we could have bought a nice apartment in Helsinki for not that much money. As it was, we were living in a beautiful apartment just a block from the Baltic to our south, and an easy walk to the embassy. In the winter, I would walk over the ice in the harbor to go to the embassy, and early in the morning, I would go cross-country skiing in the dark out on the ice. There would be some snow down on the ice. It was beautiful, dark, but you could see easily because of city light reflection off the snow. Anyhow, the rent eventually went up to well over a million bucks a year or something and so the embassy gave it up.

But alcoholism: Finns drink. Finns drink heavily, beer and hard liquor. So I think their reputation is well deserved. We never had a problem at receptions at our house, we served beer and wine, but we had a limited number of bottles and let it run out and people went home happy. There are big public picnics, like the one on May Day in Independence Park near where we were living, and lots of drinking is involved. You'd see people drunk, always men, on public transportation, but there was no problem if one just stayed out of the way. Young people drink heavily. I suppose there is an age limit, but it doesn't seem to mean much. My older daughter was in her mid-teens at the time, and I suspect she may have had a drink once or twice when out with friends. I was jealous - I would have loved to do that when I was in my teens.

But I don't want to give the wrong impression. Finnish society is extremely civilized, highly cultured, with an outstanding medical system, much better than ours. They have a wonderful education system. There was an article in a recent Smithsonian Magazine about their education system, it's one of the best in the world. They are justly well known for beautiful design in all things from textiles to architecture, and firms like Arabia and Marimekko are out there.

But Finland does have what one might call a culture of violence, one especially associated with knives, the Finnish puuko, that every Finnish workman carries at his belt, so you don't want to be around a drunk Finn with a knife.

It's also a country where guns are registered, and I think handguns are hard to get, but a lot of people have rifles and shotguns, much more so than in Europe further south or, I think, in other Nordic countries. I don't recall there being any problems with guns while I was there, but since I left, there was at least one incident when some young guy went berserk and shot up people, I think it was in a mall in eastern Helsinki.

Some of this has to do with Finnish history. Finns for the most part lived in the woods, out of cities, until fairly recently. And no one has forgotten the Winter War and Continuation War with the Soviet Union.

But as I said, alcoholism is a problem, but Finns don't drink and drive. I no longer remember the punishment, but it will be a heavy fine and loss of driver's license immediately. They don't fool around. Also, Finns have had problems with their diet. People worked in the winter in the forests, cutting timber, and they needed lots of calories. The diet used to be very heavy in fats. For example buttermilk was often on the table. It must be like drinking butter.

The Finns had bought several of our fighter planes and they were flown to Finland. I went with the ambassador, Ambassador Shearer, to an airbase and we were there for the first fighters coming in, and we were there for lunch, hosted by the Finnish Air Force. On every table was a big pitcher of buttermilk, which was surely going to clog your arteries. Even while we were in Helsinki, though, this problem was in the papers, and I bet they wouldn't serve such unhealthy stuff now.

Q: How was your staff there?

DU CHATEAU: Outstanding, just wonderful. I think I may have mentioned it earlier, but in Jerusalem and Helsinki, I was fortunate to work with amazing people. I was so lucky. Because we managed our own money and did not depend upon State and the embassy for funds, in many ways we were independent of the embassy at that point. Of course we couldn't simply go off and do something silly, but we did have our own cars, for instance, and we could hire staff if we wanted. We paid the embassy for services just like DAO and other agencies did.

The staff - among us we could handle most anything and did. Finns are notoriously quiet, but they are terribly competent. Any press event, we could do whatever was needed, easily. Anne Laanti, my press person, knew everybody in town in the press and she was respected by them all. So if the ambassador wanted to know something, or USIA wanted us to arrange something, we did it, no trouble.

The people over at the library, the Resource Center, that is, they had excellent relations with the professional staff in the university. I'd go over there as much as I could, and we had staff meetings where we'd all get together, but they worked largely independently. The staff couldn't have been better. I just don't know what I would have done without them, but consolidation with State was a constant worry, especially toward my last year.

Looking back, I recall spending much of my day in administration, one way or the other. Every year we had constant problems with USIA's so-called country plan process. This was the planning process through which we decided what we were likely to do in the next fiscal year, and then got money from USIA to fund it. They started developing their own software while I was in Helsinki, and it never worked. I hadn't worried about this stuff in prior posts as it was all done by somebody else in the USIS admin section.

It seems like I was on every embassy committee, too, although I stayed away from the International School Board and was glad I did, because they had some major problems. I was chairman of the embassy housing board, the head of the recreation association, which ran the commissary and snack bar, another problem area, I was the head of the Y2K committee, does

anyone remember Y2K? All this stuff kept me busy, and trying to keep out of trouble. I recall some real sanitary problems with the snack bar, and something was going on with the accountant for the commissary, but I don't remember exactly what it was.

Because I was PAO, I was automatically on the board of the Fulbright Commission in Helsinki. We had a very active Fulbright organization, and as I recall, it was well financed, not so much by us, the Americans, but by the Finns. It has been a dozen years since I thought about it, and I've forgotten the details, but I do recall that the Finnish Fulbright organization had a substantial trust fund to draw upon. It was money from what? A loan from the U.S., I think, but I don't recall the details. I'm sure one can find it on the Internet. Anyhow, I do remember that the program was very healthy and active. They had a fine dedicated staff in a good office downtown.

I mentioned skiing out on the ice in Helsinki, but I was also able to do a lot of biking. I always liked bikes, that is, bicycles, not those things with a motor. I biked to work when in the U.S., but I couldn't do that in Helsinki because - terrible isn't it - I lived too close to work. Anyhow, Helsinki and all of Finland is very bike friendly and there are bike trails in the cities, so it is easy to move around safely. But I always wanted to do this, so one summer, I think it was 1996, I biked from Helsinki to North Cape, the northernmost place you can drive to in western Europe. It was a wonderful adventure - one thousand miles in just over 10 days.

Q: Well, you left there when?

DU CHATEAU: Oh, consolidation happened at the end of Fiscal Year 1999, but I left in July.

End of reader