

Isn't this bloody awful?

The Kekkonen narratives: A double-hermeneutic study of the way they have co-constituted the post-Cold War identity and interests of Finland.

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We are always within a hermeneutic circle of evolving understandings, including understandings about who we are and where we come from. Therefore interpretations of history co-constitute contemporary social beings; and understandings about the past determine, in part, the political present and future. Hannu Rautkallio's The Stating of Novosibirsk and Juhani Suomi's The Time of Crisis are a case in point. They are basic works in the political hearings that are taking place about Kekkonen and Kekkonen's time in Finnish history (1956-1981). They focus in particular on year 1961, when the Soviet Union sent in October a diplomatic note to Finland requesting military consultations based on the 1948 Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. Critical analysis reveals, however, the historians' shortcomings in re-telling stories about Kekkonen and also demonstrates how the hearings into Kekkonen's time have become barricaded behind the trenches of the Cold War. Almost unnoticed, the present has been constructed in terms of standard Cold War categories (albeit with a hindsight that 'the West has won'). The positions of Cold War can be overcome however. The same historical sources can also be used to draw different conclusions. With a more hermeneutically reflective attitude and as a result of some conceptual work, new insights can be developed to the nature of the Cold War and contemporary ethico-political choices.

Introduction

Urho Kekkonen, who was elected as the President of Finland in 1956, was well-known for his swearing. When a government was formed against his will around the end of August 1958, he said:

This is bloody awful. All the work I have put into domestic and foreign policy is trickling away with the sand.

(Quoted in Suomi 1992, 150)

To paraphrase Kekkonen, we can also evaluate Hannu Rautkallio's and Juhani Suomi's books on the 1961 note crisis¹ and the role their interpretations have played in the Finnish political processes since the early 1990s: also these episodes appear rather bloody awful. However, the point is not that Kekkonen's 'work' has now been trickling away with the sand. Nor is it true that these books by Rautkallio and Suomi are 'scientifically' so unsound or otherwise insignificant that they should be overlooked or not taken seriously. A major problem is, however, the absence of hermeneutic reflection and systematic self-criticism. The claims made have not been viewed as hypothetical elements of a self-constructed narrative which could be systematically weighed against the available evidence. As a result this constructed story is believed so strongly that the available evidence is subjugated to it.

The Suomi (S) and Rautkallio (R) debate over the note crisis was particularly heated in 1992-1994, when the post-Cold War re-orientation and particularly the EU membership were discussed in Finland.² At the surface level, the S-R debate has been about the origin and purpose of the diplomatic note the Soviet Union sent to Finland on 30 October 1961, requesting military consultations based on the 1948 Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. These consultations could have resulted in regular and systematic "co-operation" with the Finnish and Soviet armies to deter any possible attack by West Germany and its allies against the Soviet Union through Finland – and could have also implied Soviet troops and Soviet-run weapons systems in Finland. Hence the note might have turned vital, although the crisis was resolved promptly and smoothly by Kekkonen during his negotiations with Nikita Khrushchev in Novosibirsk in November 1961. The question is whether their negotiations were genuine or mere acting to cover up other purposes, such as supporting Kekkonen in the March 1962 Presidential elections.

¹ I shall use the following abbreviations: For Hannu Rautkallio's *Novosibirskin lavastus: noottikriisi 1961*/The Staging of Novosibirsk (SN) and for Juhani Suomi's *Urho Kekkonen 1956-1962: kriisien aika*/The Time of Crisis (TC).

² Following many commentaries and book reviews in the press, there was a particularly (in)famous TV programme in the autumn of 1992 where Rautkallio and Suomi almost turned their heated argument into physical violence. This episode generated further editorials, TV and radio programmes and commentaries of all kind. All this in addition to the many scholarly and political seminars that were organised on this topic.

At the deeper level, the contemporary debate has been about the identity and interests of Finland after the end of the Cold War. In essence, the R-S dispute about the note crisis has been a trial on Kekkonen and his policy of neutrality. Rautkallio has acted as the general prosecutor while Suomi for his part assumed the role of Kekkonen's defence lawyer. The commentators have acted as the jury/judge, taking a stand on Kekkonen's guilt or innocence. The typical verdict has been that Kekkonen was too deeply involved in the power webs of Moscow – also for his own benefit – but in any case Rautkallio may somewhat overstate his case. The general view is also that Rautkallio fails to meet the requirements of 'scientific analysis', just as may be the case, albeit to a far lesser extent, for Kekkonen's apologist Juhani Suomi.

In this political trial, the question is also whether Finland should have distanced itself further from the Soviet Union and perhaps been more openly on the side of the West in the Cold War. The trial is in fact concerned with the guilt of the whole Kekkonen period, or in other words about everything which could in any way be associated with that time, including the universalist welfare state that was built in accordance with the 'third way' model of Sweden and widely shared social-democratic ideals of the time (for a more general political economy explanation of the decline of the Nordic model, see Patomäki 2000)³. The jury's compromise judgements typically imply that Finland should have been more in the 'western camp', even if as a non-aligned state.⁴ The time for making amends for the sins of the past is now.

³ "Beyond Nordic Nostalgia" (Patomäki 2000) is more concerned with the development of *Norden* as a whole and in particular with Sweden, which provided the political-economy model for the rest of the Nordic countries, than with Finland *per se*. Whereas Sweden began to adjust its model to the requirements of 'new times' since the major economic troubles started in the early 1970s (as a response to internal-external political economy dynamics, globalisation of the relations of production and the publicly questioned hegemony of the Socialdemocratic party), in most respects the late-comer Finland continued to build universalist welfare state rather consensually until 1989. Although also the Finnish firms were rapidly becoming transnational and although Finnish government liberalised financial markets simultaneously with Sweden in the mid-1980s, the Soviet trade ensured relative economic stability and exceptional growth rates. The steep financial crisis of 1989-1991 that coincided with the end of both the Cold War and dramatic decline of the Soviet/Russian trade changed the situation. Because of the coincidental timing and the exceptional role played by the Soviet Union in the Finnish political economy, re-interpretations of the Cold War history were more decisive in Finland than in Sweden or Norway in constituting the claims about the 'requirements of new times'. Hence, this essay can be read as a complementary analysis to the one I proposed in "Beyond Nordic Nostalgia".

⁴ NATO-membership was not an option, for it seems, also on the basis of the now public US National Security Council documents, that the US was not prepared to commit itself to the defence of Finland; see Salminen 1995, 26.

Consequently, the post-Cold War political options are categorized according to the parameters of the Cold War. The West has won and Finland should have always been more explicit about the fact that it is a part of the West. If it did not do so before, it can always do so now (if only the West will forgive Finland for acting so stupidly before: ‘we promise in future to behave with more humility and obedience to the West’). After 1995, comments on the note crisis have been rare. Although a few major studies focussing quite extensively on the note crisis have come out since 1992 (e.g. Salminen 1995; Visuri 1995), and although both Rautkallio and Suomi have continued to publish new books,⁵ it seems that the argument has been settled. A qualified middle-of-the-ground version of Rautkallio’s basic accusation seems to have been widely accepted.⁶

The purpose of my essay is to re-open this debate for three reasons. Firstly, I would like to shed light on the role of history in the process of constructing political identity and interests – the case of post-Cold War Finland being perhaps an example of more general cultural mechanisms and tendencies. Secondly, my purpose is also to compose an alternative understanding and explanation of the 1961 note crisis. I believe that my explanation can also illuminate important but largely ignored aspects of the Cold War. Thus this analysis allows me also to make a comment on aspects of International Relations theory and practice; this comment points towards opening up new emancipatory possibilities. Last but not least, I develop an ethico-political argument to the effect that the standard lessons drawn from the note crisis are partly fallacious and in other regards rather reactionary and misleading. As history plays a role in constructing national identity and interest, a re-interpretation of history implies also criticism of the prevalent ethico-political choices and, perhaps, could open up the possibility of better normative visions.

⁵ Suomi has continued his series of books on Kekkonen, each covering a particular period of time. Rautkallio’s further works include Rautkallio 1995 and 1999a.

⁶ In a *Helsingin Sanomat* (the daily newspaper of Finland) review of Rautkallio’s (1999a) *Agenda Suomi* [Agenda Finland], Jukka Tarkka writes that some of the evidence Rautkallio found in the early 1990s supports his theories; some is irrelevant; and the rest goes against his black-and-white accusations. In this review, Tarkka restates the mainstream middle-of-the-ground opinion on the note crisis and other related or similar Cold War episodes: Rautkallio’s accusations have some force, and Kekkonen was too deeply engaged in Moscow’s webs, yet conspiracy theories are quite out of place. In his response, Rautkallio (1999b) nonetheless turned the accusation against Tarkka, implicating that Tarkka may not be unbiased for he is associated with the mainstream of the Kekkonen era.

This essay is divided into three parts. In the first I shall participate in the deliberations of the jury and try systematically to set against each other Rautkallio's and Suomi's interpretations of the 1961 note crisis. Since I view Rautkallio and Suomi as mimetic constructors of the narratives of Finland's post-Cold War political identity, I will ground my deliberations on an explication of the double hermeneutic⁷ methodology of critical realism⁸, which will explain my own viewpoint. This viewpoint should also provide the opportunity to create some distance from the debate itself. In the second part I outline the development of the key political practices and institutions of the Cold War with the help of Suomi's and Rautkallio's texts. These texts contain, in fact, many important and interesting observations. In this way I will endeavour to get behind the event- and statesmen -centric political history and to examine the pre-requisites of political action (competencies, practices and their internal and external relations) and the ongoing structuration of those pre-requisites.

At the same time I will assess how the evidence provided by Suomi and Rautkallio can actually help not only to re-interpret Finnish history but also the nature of Cold War more generally. Although neither author is able to put his own horizon of interpretation at risk (see the calls for openness to otherness, also in oneself, and learning in Gadamer 1975, 306-307), both books in fact contain fresh material for interesting alternative readings as well. In the third part I shall return to the 1990s and attempt to show how re-evaluation of the R-S debate can justifiably support rather different ethico-political conclusions, overcoming the Cold War categories.

⁷ Hermeneutics is often associated with German philosophy, theology and humanism. In the 20th century, the most often cited names as include Wilhelm Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer. However, the notion of 'double hermeneutics of social sciences' comes from Anthony Giddens (1977, 12). The idea is that there is, first, the movement between theories and, second, the movement between the researcher, his or her explanatory models and the lay meanings.

⁸ In the 1960s and early 1970s, Rom Harré developed many of the central notions of critical scientific realism. Alongside Harré, also Mary Hesse, Mario Bunge and others were important in forging these new ideas about science. Harré's work was a considerable influence on Roy Bhaskar, whom Harré also supervised. In his works, Bhaskar (1975, 1979, 1986) has forcefully argued for ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgmental rationalism. However, the term 'critical realism' was not coined before the late 1980s. For a history of critical realism, with a discussion on many important contributions by theorists other than Bhaskar, particularly in social sciences, see Patomäki 2002, chapter 1; and for a collection of essential readings of critical realism, see Archer et al. 1998.

On the methodology of iconic modelling and mimetic emplotment in particular

Rautkallio and Suomi assume that only archives can provide evidence for historical studies.⁹ They also assume that the data in those archives is relatively unambiguous and unproblematic. For this reason, access to new archives is presented as being of critical importance. The dust cover of Rautkallio's book reads: "Hannu Rautkallio is the first Finnish researcher to have access to the extensive archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)".¹⁰ More laconically, Suomi's book notes that "Kekkonen's diaries are opened" (for a while, Suomi was the only person to have access to Kekkonen's personal archives). In his foreword Suomi vigorously defends his historical methods:

*Dialogue and various interpretations of the past are needed. But if, during the course of this people start to hurl such far-reaching accusations and to judge what has been done recently, there would seem to be justification for insisting that they are grounded in methods and source criteria generally accepted in scientific research.*¹¹

Both Rautkallio and Suomi have been judged by these same historical standards. Risto E.J. Penttilä (1992a, 21) insists that "we should urgently let a broader bunch of historians get their hands on both Kekkonen's and the Kremlin's archives". As he sees it, the problem is that those researchers with the 'monopoly' on access to the original sources represent extreme views on Kekkonen and Kekkonen's time. Penttilä's answer is to break down the 'monopoly'. For his part, Osmo Jussila (1992, 47-49) finds Rautkallio's ability to make use of the archives extremely weak and he deems even the 'diligent, painstaking and careful Juhani Suomi to be outside the realm of the latest, scientific age of historical writing which shows a deeper understanding of the reasons that earlier researchers were led astray". Jussila's comment can be read as a Hegelian statement that the historiographical consciousness can achieve a level of

⁹ In keeping with the traditions of political history, Rautkallio writes in a footnote (SN, 306) that, 'in this context I shall not list the broad biographical material on the subject of the note crisis, nor the political commentators' or apologists' literature because they have brought forward in decades any new basic facts on the cause or reasons for the note crisis'. The literature of the political commentators and apologists are bundled into the category of 'non-informative literature'.

¹⁰ After a brief period, these archives were soon closed again.

¹¹ TC, 11.

development that illustrates the description ‘scientific’. At this stage consciousness may finally – as the result of careful research – achieve the level of truth.

I believe too that important proofs can be found in archives and that the virtuous researcher should be aiming at truth. Nonetheless there is no reason to accept the historians’ standard view of the conclusiveness of archive material.¹² The problem with the standard view is that it shields from view the role of theoretical concepts, interpretations, imagination and systematic assessment of different explanations. There is no interpretation free of presuppositions and also prejudices. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has emphasised, no systematic historical interpretation is possible without already having a finite temporal situation as the horizon, as the standpoint from which the presumed possibilities and anticipations stem (see Linge 1977, xlvi). Also every piece of evidence found in archives must be interpreted within a finite horizon.

The interpretative and reflective nature of social sciences can be systematically explicated in term of the methodology of iconic modelling.¹³ An iconic model is a descriptive picture of a possible real world, to which it makes references. In other words, an iconic model *represents* something. All explanatory theories and stories are iconic models in this sense. Iconic models, although descriptive and explanatory models of something real, would not be possible without concepts, metaphors and imagination. Also the positivist historians’ interpretations can be analysed as iconic models and hypothetical narrative constructs. If only these historians could see their explanations as hypothetical models and as stories containing moral and poetical aspects, they could be more open both to the power of evidence and to dialogue with different others. (Movement towards this kind of orientation can also be seen as a development of consciousness – let this be my critical realist variation of the Hegelian theme). Through the imagination we can create and understand things which are not immediately to hand or visible.¹⁴ When we say that A is a model X, we are claiming

¹² Among the commentators on the R-S debate, Tuomioja (1993, 35) notes, ‘[...] the so-called historical truth is always bound to its time and circumstances and [...] the source documentation published now and in the future is not in itself as significant as one would assume from the sensationalist headlines’.

¹³ The idea of iconic modelling was put forward by Harré 1970, chapter 2. My own interpretation and adaptation is presented in Patomäki 2002, chapter 5.

¹⁴ We can use our imagination of course as well to problematize the concepts of ‘immediately to hand’ or ‘visible’

that A is somehow the same as X or rather that it, and its elements, ‘correspond’ to X and to X’s essential elements. In creating models we first collect and invent possible interesting hypotheses then try to reduce them so that finally we end up – for the time being – with a single iconic model claiming to be a true explanation.

It is clear to the historian that all social phenomena, anything that exists in society, is situated within the flow of time. Also the same social reality of the subject for the social scientist’s modelling is temporal. All temporal social processes occur in open systems, where qualitative changes and external interventions are ubiquitous. The problem is that too often historians view time too naively, as just a collection of ‘now moments’ and singular events. In other words, time is identified with the ticking of the cosmic clock. Social reality is, however, temporal also in other senses. For one thing, the reflective shaping of agents’ actions is in fact based on the dialectic interaction of three moments – a predicted future, an interpreted past and a present being realized.¹⁵ Both the future (anticipations and expectations) and the past (memory) are present while the present (the apparent focus of immediate attention) is being produced and played out. None of the connections between these three are random. Rather they are *arranged* (or at least there is an attempt to arrange them) into narratives, or into common, cohesive stories.

In itemizing the temporal arrangement of action, Paul Ricoeur defines three separate moments of *mimesis*.¹⁶ Mimesis₁ represents the action itself and the agents’ own perceptions of their temporality. At this level, a significant and partly discursive network of significant actions contains, with the help of the imagination, an arrangement of the implementation, the real and the possible events. At least the most important episodes and the entireties of individuals’ and societies’ lives are understood as *dramatic plots*. For example, someone whose marriage ends in divorce may tell a tale of ‘liberation from oppression’, or of ‘finding herself’, or of

¹⁵ Another significant level is that of emergence and absencing of social structures (as internal and external relations of positioned practices) and their constant (re)production and occasional transformation by agents through social action. I will thematise also this aspect of the 1961 note crisis in the following sections.

¹⁶ Mimesis means both imitation and representation as well as representation through artificial means. A summary of Ricoeur’s analysis of time can be found in Ricoeur 1984, 52-87; Ricoeur 1991, 99-136. I link Ricoeur’s analysis of mimesis to the idea of iconic modelling in Patomäki 2002, chapter 5.

‘alienation’, along lines that are characteristic of Western (high or late) modernity. With the help of the plot, symbolic aspects are attached to actions and these are based on a poetical ‘transfer’. The structures of the basic tales of our culture are transformed – via implicit metaphors – to arrange the actual and possible elements of the episode in question into plots. At the same time, the actions are evaluated according to the agents’ natures and the consequences of their actions with reference to approved norms and standards. At this level, time is ‘pre-formed’ or ‘ready-shaped’.

Mimesis₂ is that moment of mimesis which the historian or social scientist produces by consciously constructing a narrative iconic model to explain some event, situation, episode or tendency. The time arranged into mimesis₂ always refers to the times of mimesis₁. At the mimesis₂ level, the construction of plot and the arrangement of elements – ‘shaped time’ – is nevertheless systematically reflective and hypothetical and therefore continuously open to new evidence, to counter-argument and to new possibilities of interpretation. Mimesis₂ is not however ‘scientific’ in the scientist sense of the word but is rather based on particular conceptualisations and retains inevitably a poetical and ethico-political aspect to its arrangement of time.

Mimesis₃ is that moment of mimesis which occurs when the historian’s or the social scientist’s narrative is (contingently) fed back into the world of the agents’ time and usage, re-organizing it or reproducing it. A possible re-organization occurs through resignification of the action; we can also talk of an iconic enrichment or of an iconic augmentation of practices. Mimesis₃ takes place at the cutting edge between the world of the text and the world of the reader or the listener.

Rautkallio’s and Suomi’s interpretations of the ‘political history’ of Kekkonen’s time can thus be analysed as mimetic iconic models. It is essential to break open their stories for a reflective analysis. The aim is the truth, yet – as epistemological relativism prevails – the ‘correspondence’ between the model and its subject can be never literal or material but only metaphorical.¹⁷ Because the correspondence between the iconic model and the world is metaphorical by nature, we can easily understand

¹⁷ A deeper and more systematic analysis of the nature of truth and its ethico-political implications can be found in Patomäki 2002, chapter 6.

that even mutually conflicting groups of assertions may ‘correspond to reality’. In other words, various theoretical constructions and iconic models may be consistent with the available evidence and, in addition, it is always possible to find new evidence of how the world really was. None of this could prevent open and rational debate about truth or true explanation. On the contrary, it is the relativist yet rationalist concept of truth that prevents the typical reactionary consequences of the Truth. The relativist view supports an open and critical debate. Unlike absolutist views, it cannot render naïve support to the authority of prevailing truths. This kind of meta-theory enables not only open-mindedness but also the possibility of situated yet rational judgements about the truth of statements, models and stories.

Should Kekkonen be tried for treason or should he still be celebrated as a heroic statesman? Rautkallio’s and Suomi’s mimetic iconic models

An essential element of iconic modelling is the reflective movement from mimesis₁ to mimesis₂. Rautkallio’s and Suomi’s stories display no evidence of this movement. Rautkallio and Suomi move directly to mimesis₃ while nevertheless remaining tied up at mimesis₁ level. Implicitly, they do construct mimetic iconic models out of Finnish (foreign) policy and Kekkonen’s actions at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s but they hold back at the level of reflection of those engaged in the actions without bringing out the various possibilities for constructing an explanatory story. In other words, the actions are evaluated in an ontologically flat fashion reproducing the interpretations, norms and standards of *some* of the agents of the past.

Out of the events- and statesmen-centred story arises also an account of the nature of the agents and the consequences of the actions. This implies an implicit evaluation of persons and their actions. This kind of evaluation is of significance on the basis of the present and the future (via mimesis₃) but this is not admitted openly nor are its consequences considered explicitly. Nor do Rautkallio and Suomi observe that they are constructing plotted stories along the lines of the basic structures of a largely shared culture. What’s more, the plots presuppose particular concepts and also many theoretical assumptions, yet these are never really explicated.

Suomi's tale held sway for a quarter of a century (1962-87). It is the 'political realism's' epic tale of the statesman from a small country operating in a dangerous world. In this tale, the Cold War is viewed 'neo-realistically' à la Waltz (1979); the Cold War was simply a reflection of a bipolar world system. The world of international relations is power-political and dangerous ('anarchic', even 'chaotic'). The task of the statesman of a small country is to try and control the international anarchy through a wise and skilful diplomacy and in so doing steer his own country clear of annexation, war and violence. In the best case, the small country's heroic statesman can even participate in the maintenance of peace by means of skilful diplomacy. Nonetheless, all sorts of *dangers* lie in wait both within and beyond the borders of that country. Within the country are those political forces who 'do not understand the realities of the situation' while beyond the borders awaits the ever-threatening outbreak of new aggression from one direction or another.

Suomi's story features many theoretical pre-suppositions. He does not specifically articulate them, but Kekkonen did so, as did his predecessor President J.K. Paasikivi. Paasikivi shaped the bases of this discourse; Kekkonen amended and developed them. As a result of a certain historical complex, the old Finnish discourse articulated by Paasikivi and re-interpreted by Kekkonen – and relying a lot on German *realpolitik* – began to constitute Finland's (foreign) policy from 1943 onwards.¹⁸ This discursive formation included, among other things, the following claims:

- foreign policy takes precedence over domestic policy (*primat der ausssenpolitik*)
- the most important foreign policy problem is the relationship with Russia (either by joining 'those forces which drive anti-Russian policy' or the drive for a policy of neutrality)
- the source of all wisdom is recognition of the power-political 'reality'

An interesting detail in Suomi's book is that several chapters are titled in accordance with quotations from Kekkonen. These quotations are understandable specifically

¹⁸ See Palonen 1987 and Patomäki 1991, esp. chapter 5, for a structuring and changing of position of this discursive formulation.

through the political-realist epic tale and its theoretical basic assumptions. The chapter titles include: ‘Finland’s advantage is that the Nordic countries could stay out of a war’; ‘there’s nothing to be gained in the East without trust’; ‘this government will be seen as the first attempt to break down the post-war foreign policy line’; ‘if we can get our foreign policy, peace and security policies to succeed, everything else will fall into place’; ‘HE WHO HAS NOT FACED THE IMPOSSIBLE, AT ITS GATES, DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT SORT OF WORLD THIS IS’ (in capitals). These quotations are therefore just implications of the theoretical basic assumptions of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line and of the heroic story which is linked so organically to them. The mimetic iconic model constructed and supported by Suomi is very close to Kekkonen’s own understanding.¹⁹

Rautkallio’s story is radically different. Rautkallio represents in many respects the traditional views of Kekkonen’s fiercest opponents, politically locatable in the right – that was largely marginalized during Kekkonen’s era – and in the conservative and nationalist part of the Social Democratic Party that was associated with the notion of ‘companion in arms’²⁰. What were these traditional views then? In his own book²¹ Suomi brings forward the views of Kekkonen’s 1950s opponents and in particular he comments the article which appeared in the autumn 1957 edition of the Social Democratic Party’s (SDP) *Sosialistinen aikakauslehti* (Socialist Journal) entitled ‘Mein Kampf’. Kekkonen, who represented the rural-based predecessor of the present-day Centre Party, was portrayed in this article as insatiably power hungry. Kekkonen was made to represent everything that was wrong and to be condemned. Among other things, Kekkonen was claimed to be striving for the break-up of the SDP as a way of strengthening his own position. The central thesis of the article however was that Kekkonen was propping up his own power with the help of the Soviet Union and riding on the ‘East wind’. During the 1950s even fiercer views were expressed. For example, the academic Paavo Ravila went further than the “Mein

¹⁹ Certainly Pertti Joenniemi has noted that Kekkonen was more complex than Suomi would lead us to believe and he in fact represents a watershed in several traditions. As a result, Juhani Suomi’s Kekkonen is perhaps more of a ‘power politician’ than Kekkonen would have seen himself to be.

²⁰ Referring to the post-civil war re-integration of the Socialdemocratic party to the political life in Finland and in particular to the national unification during the winter and continuation wars 1939-1944.

²¹ TC, 98-102

Kampf’ article, claiming that Kekkonen was aiming at dictatorship by joining Finland to the Soviet Union.²²

Rautkallio’s view is close to that of the spirit of the ‘Mein Kampf’ article. He does not claim Kekkonen was after a dictatorship or after joining Finland to the Soviet Union, but he does accuse Kekkonen not only of an insatiable egoistical hunger for power but also of serving as a go-between for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the KGB – and even of collaboration amounting to an outright treason:

As Kekkonen and the KGB had drawn up a plan at the beginning of 1961 for a crisis for that same year, then Kekkonen’s communications with the West can be seen as some kind of early warning²³.

Presidential elections were approaching in Finland, and the presumption is that the point of the alleged or implicated ‘plan’ was to get Kekkonen re-elected (against his opponent Olavi Honka, who wanted to ‘purify politics’ and take more distance from the Soviet Union). A bit later Rautkallio notes in his book:

... the preservation of Urho Kekkonen’s domestic policy and the suppression of the Honka union was at the same time the main goal of the Moscow centres. The diplomatic note concerning West German militarism and the revanchist spirit concealed this goal but the note was an excuse for the realization of Urho Kekkonen’s and the CPSU Central Committee’s plan...²⁴

According to Rautkallio, Kekkonen was the CPSU Central Committee’s and the KGB’s ‘own man’. Rautkallio’s story is, in its entirety, that of a man corrupted by power who relies on the support of a large, foreign, enemy power in order to maintain his own position. Only status, respect and money mean anything to this man. He is ready to gamble the future of his country for the sake of his own position.²⁵ “During

²² TC, 97

²³ SN, 118

²⁴ SN, 124

²⁵ This story must be understood through a certain central anecdote of liberalism: ‘power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely’.

the years 1960-61 Kekkonen gambled because his own career as a statesman was at risk".²⁶ Also tied in with this story is the Manichaeic interpretation of the Cold War, according to which the Soviet Union represents everything that is bad and wrong whereas the West, and in particular Great Britain and the United States, represent truth, fairness and goodness if not actually saintliness.²⁷ In accordance with this view, Rautkallio uses western sources, especially Great Britain's Foreign Office documents as if they unquestionably represent the objective Truth about Finnish politics.²⁸

*O'Neil referred to two analogies in evaluating Kekkonen's 'sub-conscious motives' which, in the president's opinion are not even in the most awkward situations' at odds with his own conception of himself as a tough and patriotic Finn.' O'Neill sums this up poetically: 'If you've got to live in hell's hallway, it's not too long before you start making excuses for the devil himself.'*²⁹

It is only possible to place statements like these in the midst of a historical story without any comments if you believe that they tell something essential and authentic about the world. We therefore have two sharply divergent tales of recent political history. These tales can be understood as interesting hypotheses in the process of constructing an iconic model. The next task is to evaluate their validity in the light of the available evidence.

What does the available evidence tell us about the diplomatic note crisis and about Kekkonen?

What then does the evidence presented by Rautkallio and Suomi tell us about the diplomatic note crisis and about Kekkonen more generally? First I allow Rautkallio to present his accusation; at the same time I will examine his sources critically. Next I shall allow Suomi to give the reasons for his own interpretations, examining also his

²⁶ SN, 46

²⁷ About the nature and long history of Manicheism, see Harle 2000.

²⁸ Rautkallio has also published a book on 'Kekkonen and Moscow' bearing the sub-title 'Finland as seen from the West'; Rautkallio (1991).

²⁹ SN 53; my emphasis.

sources critically. Finally, I shall construct a possible new iconic model and mimetic story which fits with the evidence presented by Rautkallio and Suomi and others better than their own descriptions and explanations.

By far the most forceful possible accusation is that Kekkonen *planned* the diplomatic note crisis either with the Central Committee of the CPSU or with the KGB or with both. Rautkallio claims that this is what happened. If this accusation is true then it is pointless to ask about the reason for sending the note anymore than to ask whether Kekkonen knew about it beforehand. If, on the other hand, Kekkonen had not ordered and planned the note crisis, the question arises, ‘why was the note sent?’. Did Kekkonen know of it in advance? Suomi answers these questions by saying that the sending of the note was related to Cold War tensions between the major powers – including the building of the Berlin wall that was completed on 13 August 1961 – and that Kekkonen did not know of it in advance.

As said, Rautkallio accuses Kekkonen of planning the note together with the central leadership of the Soviet Union without telling even his closest advisors. Rautkallio opens his book with a question which hints at the ability to see the claims as hypothetical. “Did the President of the Republic of Finland Urho Kekkonen order the note in 1961 to ensure the continuance of his presidency?” Was Kekkonen even aware of this strong Soviet intervention?”³⁰ Rautkallio asserts that the opening up of the Moscow archives in particular has helped answer this question as ‘with the help of new data we have received from the Soviet Union we can scrutinize the explanations and theories that have hitherto been presented on the reasons for the diplomatic note crisis’. Already in the section quoted, Rautkallio also claims that ‘the note was an excuse for the realization of Urho Kekkonen’s and the CPSU Central Committee’s plan *as the Soviet documents confirm*’ (emphasis HP).³¹

In principle Rautkallio’s method is correct: there is a question for which an answer is sought using the available evidence. After examining carefully the source references given by Rautkallio I have nonetheless come to the conclusion that he is guilty,

³⁰ SN, 7

³¹ SN, 111

apparently unwittingly, of a combination of wishful thinking and unreflective attitude – unless he misrepresents the facts purposefully. None of the sources to which Rautkallio refers proves that Kekkonen would have planned the 1961 note crisis. Rautkallio uses ‘loaded statements’. In the middle of an otherwise comparatively well documented story he inserts statements which pre-suppose that Kekkonen planned the note crisis with the Moscow centres. This is not however shown anywhere.

What is a ‘loaded statement’? A classic example is ‘Have you stopped beating your wife?’ This question is cloaked in a fashion that demands a yes or no answer. Whatever you answer nevertheless confirms that you have been in the habit of beating your wife, even if that is not the case. (See Walton 1989, 28-31) In the same way, Rautkallio inserts in the middle of his story statements which assume Kekkonen planned the note. Rautkallio writes for example, as follows: “What sort of ‘conclusion’ got Kekkonen to conjure up, already in April 1961, a chain of events that unravelled in just the way he wanted?”³² “According to the documents of the Central Committee of the CPSU Kekkonen did not make a single significant domestic- or foreign policy decision during 1961 without discussing it first with the centres in Moscow. There was no price too great to secure Kekkonen’s re-election.”³³ “This “‘Kekkonen plan’ (Soviet Embassy’s words) according to which the note’s primary task was...”³⁴ And so on. Rautkallio lures the reader into accepting the claim that it is proved that Kekkonen ordered the note or, more accurately, planned it with the Soviets. In the same way, he attempts to lead the reader to accepting the claim that Kekkonen was the Soviet Union’s ‘own man’. These are nevertheless nowhere demonstrated.

A claim does not become true even if it is repeated a thousand times. Evidence is needed. The evidence Rautkallio offers to support the case that Kekkonen planned the note crisis with ‘the Moscow centres’ is almost non-existent. Rautkallio’s claims are based, as far as I can see, on three sources and even so in a very uncertain and ambiguous manner: [1] Rautkallio often refers to Vorin’s memo and to Zacharov’s

³² SN,25: no reference.

³³ SN,94: no reference.

³⁴ SN,203: no reference.

diary without ever stating directly what they say; [2] Rautkallio also refers a few times to a Soviet embassy report from Helsinki in 1961, but does not tell much of its content instead presenting what are predominantly his own conclusions from the text; [3] Rautkallio claims that the expressions ‘manoeuvre’, ‘Kekkonen’s manoeuvre’ and ‘the Rural Alliance (Maalaisliitto) manoeuvre’ are used synonymously in the Soviet documents and that the diplomatic note crisis in Soviet documents is called the ‘Kekkonen manoeuvre’, though Rautkallio (who does not speak Russian) does not quote these directly nor define the differences between these phrases. Instead of appending to his book translations of these documents so central to his claims, he only attaches ‘the diplomatic note from the Soviet government to the Finnish government of 30.10.1961’, an extract from Gromyko’s diary concerning Foreign Minister Karjalainen’s reception, a memo from the Novosibirsk discussion and ‘a press release concerning the Novosibirsk discussion’.

Because it is not shown that Kekkonen would have ordered and planned the crisis, the questions arise of why the note should have been sent and did Kekkonen know in advance. Suomi answers that the note was a part of superpower struggles – the world was on the edge of war in autumn 1961 – and that Kekkonen did not know in advance. Suomi finds fault with the views that Kekkonen would have planned the note or the crisis or known about it in advance. According to Suomi, the accusations are based either on what ‘CIA representative Frank Friberg 30 years later recalls Anatoli Golitsyn telling him on his defection to the USA’³⁵, about the evidence of Kekkonen’s unnatural calm during the crisis and on Ahti Karjalainen’s description of Kekkonen’s plan to dissolve parliament during the coming autumn:

Later some far-reaching conclusions were made based on what Karjalainen told. Not so much on the basis of his diary - since it does not contain any more detail - but rather based on what the compiler of Karjalainen’s memoirs has written about the events. Jukka Tarkka underlines how Kekkonen’s proposal (to dissolve parliament and bring forward the elections) ties in with the later timetable of the diplomatic note

³⁵ TC,549. Rautkallio refers to this episode but does not rely on it but rather then on ‘Soviet archives he has found’.

*crisis. For many this has been enough to prove that Kekkonen knew of the note in advance.*³⁶

According to Suomi, Kekkonen's plan was purely a domestic policy ploy to set the Honka parties against each other. He emphasizes that at times Kekkonen also had the option of dissolving parliament in June but decided finally just to nominate new ministers (the diplomatic note was issued October 30th and according to the plan hinted at by Karjalainen, Kekkonen was to dissolve parliament in November 1961, as in fact happened on 14 November).

Rautkallio claims that Kekkonen and the KGB had already drawn up the plans for the note crisis at the beginning of 1961. The things Suomi brings up may perhaps show that the timetable was not finalized yet in the spring. On the other hand, Rautkallio also claims – perhaps contradicting himself – that the choice of timing for the note was at least still open in the spring and that it became Leonid Brezhnev's task a few months later to determine a timetable for events with Kekkonen. Brezhnev – then President of the Soviet Union – visited Finland in September 1961. Suomi also takes a stand on this question. He attempts to argue that certain subjects were not discussed at all during Brezhnev's visit.

*Later, when talking about the crisis, representatives of the so-called 'diplomatic note to order' theory have claimed that the note was agreed during Brezhnev's visit and that this agreement was reached specifically in one-on-one discussions during the long train journey. Nonetheless, the travel arrangements argue against that assumption. Both Kekkonen and Brezhnev travelled in their own private carriages; they met mainly at mealtimes. Few discussions took place in Kekkonen's carriage where the interpreters and a Finnish stenographer were also present. In the same carriage were the adjutants and palace staff. Also arguing against the claim is the state of relations between the two men. They were rarely on the same wavelength.*³⁷

³⁶ TC,419

³⁷ TC,435-436

This argument is fairly weak. How can one show, in the absence of specific statements from those present, that a specific subject was not discussed at all? Suomi attempts, in addition, to show that Brezhnev's and Kekkonen's attention was elsewhere. He asserts that it is true that Kekkonen was looking for the opportunity for a foreign policy display in the run up to the presidential elections but that this display was intended to be related to opening the door towards border adjustments in Karelia. The Soviet stance on this question proved to be nevertheless ever more closed and Kekkonen could not, from his side, approve the linking of possible territorial agreements with the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (this could have contributed towards redefining Finland as an ally of the Soviet Union and would never have been approved in Finland). In order to stress Kekkonen's independence, Suomi also tells that in his talks with Brezhnev Kekkonen emphasized the fundamental *differences* between Finland and the Soviet Union (as he had done earlier and more forthrightly with Khrushchev). Kekkonen stressed two facts: (1) the Soviet Union is a superpower, Finland is a small power; (2) Finland is different and will stay different both ideologically and by nature of its social system. 'Kekkonen's stand was noted with satisfaction, at least in the British press.'³⁸

According to Suomi's interpretation, Brezhnev had a clear task but this did not include agreeing with Kekkonen on a note but rather to get confirmation that Finland would support Soviet policy on Germany and would generally become active in campaigning for peace. Brezhnev's 'attempt nevertheless failed. Kekkonen stuck firmly to the views he expressed during the early part of his visit and did not move from his position. Brezhnev had to return to Moscow with empty hands.'³⁹ This is Suomi's interpretation; there are no references. The main evidence is the previously presented indignation of the Soviets that Finland had not agreed to condemn the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion (in April) at the UN, as well as Brezhnev's continually repeated demand that small states such as Finland should stand 'firm in the fight for peace?' especially against the 'West German revanchism'.

³⁸ TC,437-443

³⁹ TC,444

After this Suomi moves on to describe Kekkonen's visit to the United States and the discussions he had there. Kekkonen noted to Kennedy that he 'had got from his discussions the impression that the lessons of history had made the Soviet leadership truly fearful of the military build up in Federal Germany and of the danger it represented'.⁴⁰ It appears that 'the Americans' also feared the rise of German nationalism but that they saw Germany's inclusion in European integration and into NATO as a way of preventing it. Kekkonen was not quite of the same opinion and he decided to comment generally that '...for our own sake, we (Finns) must take the Soviet Union's security questions into consideration regardless of whether we feel they are justified'⁴¹. This hints that Brezhnev might not – in spite of Suomi's claims – have returned to Moscow with empty hands. At least it is clear that the German question was important to all concerned.

According to Suomi's interpretation, Kekkonen did not plan the note, did not know of it, nor could he even guess it would arrive. The diplomatic note was, at first, simply just a signal within the game of superpowers, even if the motives behind it may have changed between the end of October and the subsequent negotiations in Novosibirsk. In Suomi's opinion it is clear that the note was one of the signals meant to assure the US and NATO that the Soviet Union is sufficiently powerful to counter any attack or aggressive action. Together with simultaneous major nuclear testing, this also directed attention away from the Soviet Union's withdrawal in West Berlin.⁴² Suomi's assumption appears to be that if Kekkonen had not planned the note, then he did not know about it in advance either. This is not necessarily true, however. Kekkonen could well have anticipated the note or been informed beforehand, even if the note was in no way planned by him. In addition, it is possible that the note could have been expected even if there was no specific advance knowledge of its contents.⁴³

⁴⁰ TC,458

⁴¹ From TC,462. This is an ambiguous statement as Kekkonen too showed he believed the threat from Germany. The statement also differentiates Kekkonen from Paasikivi who delineated between the legitimate and the illegitimate *Staaträson* (even in the case of the Soviet Union). See Palonen 1987,106.

⁴² TC,544.

⁴³ Following a report by Captain Risto Hyvärinen dated on 3 August, the Defence Minister asked General T. Viljanen (Chief Commander of the Finnish Army) to prepare a half-an-hour presentation to the government on the question of possible Soviet request for military consultations. Indeed, it is

Suomi's evidence includes many of Kekkonen's and Khrushchev's comments as well as evaluations of the political situation at different levels in autumn 1961. Included in these comments is Kekkonen's *diary entry* in which he sees Moscow's concern over security as the fundamental reason for the note. Finland, in Kekkonen's opinion, was just a 'post office' to NATO's, close to Denmark and Norway.⁴⁴ Kekkonen left on his trip to Siberia 'unaware of what the Soviet government was really aiming at'. Suomi also mentions an episode intended to illustrate Kekkonen's uncertainty⁴⁵:

*There was a small incident at the airport, the significance of which was later underlined by Kekkonen himself. His Soviet counterpart had appointed Kotov as interpreter. When he went from the VIP lounge to the waiting plane, Kotov walking beside him said calmly, 'Don't worry Mr Kekkonen!'. On his return from Novosibirsk Kekkonen told his family about it and noted that it wasn't until Kotov's comment that his uncertainty eased. Only after this, did he believe that there might possibly be a favourable outcome for Finland in the upcoming discussions.*⁴⁶

How reliable is Kekkonen's diary entry? How reliable is this 'incident related to the family'? Was the diary written for himself or for posterity? Did Kekkonen tell his family all matters of state? Do these bits of information demonstrate that Kekkonen did not know about the note beforehand?

If Rautkallio *cannot show* that Kekkonen did not take part in the planning of the note, then Suomi with his archive material *cannot show* that Kekkonen did not know in advance or anticipate the note or that the note's original and knowing goal would have been (also?) the reinforcement of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line through the securing of a second term for Kekkonen. In fact Suomi affirms that one reason for the note was Kekkonen's attempt to get western support for his policy of neutrality and to establish

generally known that General T. Viljanen warned the Finnish government already in August 1961 of the possibility of note requiring military consultations; Maude 1987, 50; Visuri 1995, 178-185.

⁴⁴ TC, 484.

⁴⁵ TC, 519.

⁴⁶ TC, 521-522.

it as ‘really neutral’.⁴⁷ These attempts made anxious the Soviets who wanted to influence the shaping of Finland’s policy of neutrality.

An alternative explanatory story of the diplomatic note crisis

On the basis of the evidence I can now present an alternative story of the diplomatic note crisis. My hypothesis is that the story of the diplomatic note can be seen loosely as an Aristotelian tragedy. I shall attempt to justify this hypothetical mimetic iconic model with the help of the evidence proffered by Rautkallio and Suomi.

In Aristotle’s (e.g. II; VI: 5) view, life is action. People are in themselves neither good nor bad, it is only their actions that make them relatively good or bad. Aristotle believes plot is more important than mere characterization because it is a person’s actions that portray his character. Moreover, a mere assessment of the character and virtue of men would not in itself render a tragedy and the emotions a tragic story evokes possible. The key to understanding tragedy is the layout of events:

But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not quality.

(VI: 9)

The ability to express in words what is possible and pertinent in a situation is also essential (this, in Aristotle’s opinion, is the link that joins poetry and rhetoric and politics). Speech and action go together. Character is manifested in and also evolves through speech and actions.

Character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character.

⁴⁷ TC, 545.

People also display their character in attempting to prove particular ontological or existential claims or general maxims true or false. (Ibid.)

Tragedy has a beginning, a middle and an end, and it evokes emotions – in particular through acts that inspire fear or pity. “Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effects.” (IX: 11) Tragedy thus features sudden changes in direction or reversals of the situation, *peripeteias*, and recognition of the true nature of the situation, a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love, hatred or other strong emotions among characters. (See X; and XI). “The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in the Oedipus.” (XI: 2) Tragedy also often features suffering and actions that cause pain. Finally a good plot is always multi-stranded, not too simple; the protagonist should not be too one-dimensional. A good protagonist is not particularly virtuous or righteous, he is not driven to misfortune by evil or depravity but by some error or frailty.

It is possible and, in the light of the available empirical evidence, plausible to construct an explanatory story about the note crisis along the lines of Aristotelian tragedy. A tragic tale of the diplomatic note crisis could be summed up as follows.⁴⁸ For the sake of this argument it is essential to know that Kekkonen had developed ‘confidential relations’ with Moscow – in some sense more confidential than, for example, with the foreign affairs committee of the Parliament of Finland. Moscow was not only very aware of the Honka union and the Finnish preparations for the possibility of a note asking for military consultations, provoked by the Berlin crisis,⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Note, however, that the end of the story is ambiguous and open to debate, perhaps ‘happy’ in the senses that Finland avoided military consultations and Kekkonen was re-elected, and not therefore straightforwardly ‘tragic’.

⁴⁹ Salminen (1995, 72-73) points out that the Soviet Union had took up the possibility of military consultations already in winter 1958-59 when the new Finnish government assumed a more critical line on the Soviet Union (against Kekkonen’s will and to his deep disappointment, indicating that Moscow’s hints then might have been meant to support Kekkonen’s line). Because of the Berlin crisis, the threat of a note was taken very seriously by the Finnish military in particular in the late summer and early autumn 1961. In particular, General Viljanen (Chief Commander of the Army) gave a presentation on the danger of military consultation with the Soviet Union to the government on 9 August 1961. The army had also a vested interest in warning about this danger, for it was actively

but also of Kekkonen's plans to dissolve parliament in the autumn. Kekkonen had also asked Moscow for support in his re-election, in particular in the form of a re-evaluation of the borders of Karelia.

Kekkonen's request to Moscow was made in a Finland embroiled in the weaving of plots and in a politically demoralized and partly also corrupt political practices, the money coming often from outside Finland e.g. from the CIA, the KGB or LO (the central agency of Swedish labour unions). Kekkonen was not, generally speaking, any more or any less corrupt or virtuous than other Finnish politicians, even though he seems to have overlooked the corrupt practices of his aide Korsimo and even though Honka was hailed as a 'Mr Clean' up against 'dirty politics'. In any case, Kekkonen's motive was supposedly 'patriotism' and a securing of his own position, the two of which he combined. Securing Finland's position in his opinion required the continuance of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line which, as a result of the political process, was personified in Kekkonen himself.

Moscow really did support Kekkonen's campaign, but not in the way he wished. Rather the support came, unexpectedly, in the form of a note proposing military consultations as specified in the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. This was a *peripeteia*, a relatively sudden reversal, which seems to have frightened both Kekkonen and the whole of Finland, which, according to many interpretations, was in the grip of war fever in late autumn 1961.⁵⁰ Therefore, the note was not ordered from Tamminiemi (the location of Kekkonen's villa in Helsinki) – even though various forms of support were requested for the presidential elections. The note was probably Khrushchev's own idea. Kekkonen might have been told, possibly just a few days or weeks before it was given. However, the note was sent with no regard to Kekkonen's opinion and without asking his permission.

lobbying for money and weapons (the Finnish defence budget was the lowest in Europe as measured in terms of ratio to GDP). Indeed, after the note crisis, the army was able to secure the procurement of a number of new modern weapons systems, even though the defence budget remained low. See Visuri 1995, 183-204.

⁵⁰ However, General Viljanen's earlier warning may in fact have relieved some of the 'acuteness' of this turn of events.

In this story, consistent with the evidence provided, Khrushchev's idea was born already in late spring or summer 1961. Khrushchev tried to kill two birds with one stone: to assist in the re-election of Kekkonen and to demonstrate the strength and power of Moscow to the West (sending a note to Finland and nuclear testing were thus different parts of the grand strategy). In addition, his intention was to slightly correct the course of Finland's policy of neutrality. Military consultations were not the intention; the note was 'political'. The note was also intended to offer Kekkonen a good reason to dissolve parliament, in line with Kekkonen's own plans. The note nevertheless put Kekkonen in a very difficult position: what was Moscow driving at?; what would actually happen to him and to Finland?; had he failed in his foreign policy?; should he resign? Kekkonen really appears to have considered for a moment whether to refuse both the consultation and the presidential candidacy.⁵¹

It may be that *recognition* – in line with an Aristotelian tragedy – of the true nature of the situation occurred not until reaching Moscow airport. Later Kekkonen himself emphasized the significance of the incident there. At the airport, the interpreter Kotov commented calmly, 'don't worry Mr Kekkonen!'. Perhaps Kekkonen only then saw the link between his own plans and the diplomatic note. After this, the end may have been theatre. Kekkonen began to understand what Khrushchev was getting at and finally he accepted the help on offer even though aware how closely he was sailing to unacceptable action (at least in a moral sense). This choice reveals the nature of the 'realism' of both Kekkonen's and of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line.

US diplomat G.B.Gufler tells that when he tried to authenticate directly from Kekkonen the information on the note crisis he received from the defector Golitsyn, the occasion was a grim one and Kekkonen was clearly agitated when he said that he had 'sometimes got into situations which were not easily defended'⁵². At the beginning of the following year Kekkonen was nevertheless re-elected as president because his actions were deemed to be those of a heroic, wise and far-sighted

⁵¹ TC,485. The information is based on a TV and radio speech Kekkonen drafted on his return journey from Hawaii which he never in fact gave. He also revealed his intention to Miettunen and to Karjalainen.

⁵² SN,248-249. It is worth remembering what Aristotle said 'about the inevitabilities of events' and their role in stories.

statesman. As it appeared, Kekkonen was able to avoid the military consultations with skilful diplomacy and thereby also retain the full independence of Finland. The note was in part an unintentional and unforeseen consequence of his own actions and requests for support from Moscow. By creating ‘confidential relations’ with the Soviet leadership, and by personifying them, Kekkonen may have bound both himself and other Finnish figures more than he initially realized.

Two variations of this basic story can be presented. The first interpretation, perhaps kinder to Kekkonen’s character, would have him not know of the note in advance and at most being only aware of warnings about this possibility, as they has been discussed for instance in the government a few weeks earlier. Perhaps Kekkonen considered giving up the game because of his fear of a total collapse of his foreign policy? In this way the Moscow airport incident would have been a real ‘recognition’.

It is also possible that Kekkonen was informed beforehand of the soon-to-arrive note. In this version Kekkonen had to make a choice on his return journey to Finland. Should he play Khrushchev’s risky game without being certain what he was really aiming for? Or should he give up the game as there appeared to be too many *dangers* both for Kekkonen himself and for Finland? This was the choice Kekkonen faced, and he decided to accept the risks and bear responsibility in the sense of a ‘realist’ statesman. According to this interpretation, the incident at Moscow airport might not have been a full recognition but only a clarification of the situation.

Rautkallio’s main evidence in support of Kekkonen knowing about the note in advance is Gromyko’s reply to Ambassador Wuori who accepted the note. He actually requested a delay in the publication on the basis that the president and the foreign minister were abroad at the time. ‘An irritated Gromyko dismissed Wuori’s request dryly: “They (Kekkonen and Karjalainen) already know about it”.’⁵³ In addition Rautkallio claims that UN ambassador Ralph Enckell, who relayed the information about the Soviet note by phone to the island of Maui, believes it impossible that the

⁵³ SN,142.

president would not have been informed of the note in advance.⁵⁴ It is therefore not only possible but also likely that Kekkonen was informed in advance of the note.⁵⁵

The interpretation of the dual role of the note is supported by a letter published by Rautkallio sent from foreign minister Gromyko to the CPSU on 16 October 1961 ‘in accordance with instructions’⁵⁶. The letter contains a draft for a diplomatic note together with the reasons for the note. Two reasons are given. The first relates to ‘the dangerous development in West Germany’, which threatened to impact on the Baltic region. Linked to this is also a reference to Denmark and Norway’s NATO policy. The second reason is the question of influence over internal forces.

The note to be sent to the government of Finland will, in the view of the Soviet Union’s foreign ministry, place in a difficult situation President Kekkonen’s opponents and the country’s reactionary circles, which oppose peace agreement with Germany and try to justify German militarism and revanchism. (The note) will help those forces in Finland who oppose the revival of militarism in West Germany and who support Finland’s present foreign policy. It would be appropriate to deliver the note to Finland’s ambassador in Moscow on October 30th.

It is wholly possible, and even probable, that Kekkonen was informed of these intentions, perhaps between October 16th and October 30th, possibly earlier, for example during Brezhnev’s visit or at some other time during the late summer or early autumn. Although there is no conclusive evidence, we can see this as perhaps the most probable variation of the basic story.

⁵⁴ SN,143.

⁵⁵ Moreover, Salminen (1995: 84) maintains that General Simelius and other commanders of the Finnish Army were told already on 30 October 1961, immediately after the note was handed to Ambassador Wuori in Moscow, that Kekkonen knew about the note before it was formally given. This created confusion among them, but no suspicions (then or later) of treason or conspiracy.

⁵⁶ At least part of this letter is found in SN,139.

What Rautkallio and Suomi reveal about Kekkonen as a member of the society of 'realist' statesmen

It is time to try to get behind stories focussing on personalities and events and examine briefly the pre-requisites of political action, i.e. practices and institutions and their ongoing structuration. Perhaps Rautkallio and Suomi can tell more than just a story of particular events? In the light of the evidence presented by them, Kekkonen's actions can be seen best when he is viewed as a member of the community of 'realist' statesmen. This community of 'realist' statesmen is constituted by particular shared intersubjective understandings and related practices, in line with 'political realism'.⁵⁷ We can go further and suggest that Cold War era Finnish politics has to be understood as a transnational battle about the extent to which 'realist' practices should be accepted in their own right and the extent to which Finland should rather take part in the Manichean fight between East and West. Besides a more rightist or nationalist constituency leaning towards the West, the relatively strong Communist Party of Finland favoured taking a Soviet stand in these struggles. Kekkonen himself advocated purely 'realist' practices, and certain incidents – not least the diplomatic note crisis – entrenched this position. This 'pure realism' was soon slightly modified. In the course of the 1960s there started to be a trickle of hope for 'improvement' and for some Kantian moralistic endeavours – for a change of situation that was better also for Finland. As a result, Finland's foreign policy became somewhat more active and innovative, as exemplified by the CSCE process. In addition to everything else, Kekkonen also turned Finland into a 'bridge builder' between East and West.⁵⁸

Suomi's book in particular is full of perceptive descriptions both of the practices of the community of 'realist' statesmen's but also of the largely secret transnational social relations and related struggles that were taking place in Finland. Rautkallio's book contains many good examples as well. Both works can be read as evidence that Finland's 'domestic' politics during the Cold War was to a large extent intermingled

⁵⁷ See Ashley 1987. It is also worth complementing this with reference to Der Derian (1987, 37, 110-113), who argues that the practices of *realpolitik* and diplomacy presuppose an *alienation* of the political societies but are in part independent of those political societies.

⁵⁸ This aspect of the policy of neutrality culminated in the CSCE Conference in Helsinki in 1974.

with secret, ‘realist’ diplomacy and intelligence, involving both constructing ‘theories’ or gathering knowledge and interference in developments.⁵⁹

Many episodes featured bitter struggles and fighting. Transnational power and control were nevertheless usually hidden under certain ‘normalized forms’ – based usually on a clear distinction between the front and back regions of social interactions – and most often kept also formally secret, in accordance with the standard procedures of states. There were battles over the recognition and justification of various subjects: some subjects were recognized, others were not. ‘Realist’ rituals, techniques and strategies kept resistance and all sorts of alternative practices under control.

Besides bitter struggles, actions in the name of states tend to include another, ‘more social’ dimension, which is illustrated by the warm personal relations between Kekkonen and Khrushchev (this relationship was reproduced by many other actors in ‘lower’ level Finnish-Soviet interactions between diplomats, businessmen and later also army officers). “We have learned to see each other as people.”⁶⁰ Kekkonen and Khrushchev always quickly found a common bond. In sauna or at the late night banquet tables they both joked and discussed serious affairs.

During the night hours, Khrushchev got into discussion about the threat posed by the German Federal Republic. He told of how it would be destroyed in a moment by ten missiles already standing by in the Soviet Union. The atmosphere was carefree. During the small hours, Khrushchev several times referred to Kekkonen as a magician with regard to relations with the Soviet Union...⁶¹

This, if anything, is ‘realism’. Power politics, anarchy and the security dilemma are accepted as realities during the nuclear age. You can’t moralize about them, nor are they moralized, because progress or moral strivings (utopias) do not seem possible.

⁵⁹ In Greek polis, “*theoria* were individuals designated by Greek officials to witness and later verbally certify the happening of an event that was considered important for the polity” (Der Derian, 1992, 24). In addition to this, “intelligence” also often involves defines systematic interference into the affairs of other states. In this respect the CIA has not been the least bit less active than the KGB.

⁶⁰ TC,121.

⁶¹ TC,334.

The world is unsafe and it has a tendency again and again to return to violence. So one military-strategic logic is set against another. At the same time, the agents of these practices, the statesmen, can find in each other's company a face-to-face bond, 'a common, personal wavelength'. This is why statesmen can tell each other in the small hours of the night, in passing, of their power to destroy a whole country with just a few new missiles – in a carefree atmosphere evoked also by some vodka.

On the constitution of the post-Cold War identity and interests

An understanding of where 'we' (in this case, Finland) are coming from is intimately connected to a vision of 'our' possible and desirable future – and both are reasons for contemporary ethico-political choices. In this way, the R-S debate on the note crisis has been an important episode in the process of re-defining the identity and interests of Finland. In particular, the R-S debate also features, more or less openly, discussion about whether Finland should have distanced itself more from the Soviet Union and perhaps at the same time been more clearly on the side of the West in the Cold War.

Jarmo Virmavirta's (1992) *Wake Up Finland, the Post-War Period is Over* offers an excellent opportunity to examine the ethico-political lessons drawn from the R-S debate. Virmavirta's perception of the diplomatic note crisis is close to Rautkallio's interpretation, though it is more qualified and moderate. Virmavirta sees the note crisis as a decisive incident in the political history of a quarter of a century.

It is of secondary importance who thought up the note. Of primary importance is that after the note the Soviet Union, the CPSU, had a veto on Finnish politics, Finland's domestic affairs and even on the words of the president. After this you didn't get past Moscow into the Finnish government and there you needed Kekkonen's say-so. [...] It became a national habit. [...] Finland's habit to handle Moscow first, to present things there first of all. The Soviet control system began to feed on itself so that it engulfed more and more varied things

(Ibid., 48-49)

Virmavirta considers this as immoral and now demands a new, moral politics. However, the criteria for his 'moral politics' are not related to the territorial independence of Finland. In reference to the integration of western Europe, Virmavirta in fact notes that 'independence' can only be retained if we are bold enough to risk losing it' (ibid., 222). What was problematical in Finlandization in Virmavirta's eyes is simply that (i) the Soviet Union was an evil, communist and totalitarian state and that (ii) the controlling system in the Soviet Union was based, in the final analysis, on fear and threats. Virmavirta (1992, 126) also notes that 'in the Europe where people get together, the citizens' morals are carried through into foreign policy'. The EU's foreign policy is thus moral by definition.

Virmavirta assumes that if and when the West also gets a foothold in the East, there will be no more war or threat of war. It was the Soviet Union that caused the problem of war and militarisation. Moreover, the identity of the West is equated with the currently hegemonic neoliberalism, comprising beliefs in the individual's liberalist rights and freedom; the diversity of the individuals; and the virtue and creative power of 'free markets'. The nature of the post-Cold War competition between states is first and foremost economic. Europe and the world will be divided according to economic and technological capability. Finland must change radically if it intends to stay on the right (winning) side of the dividing line. This is another reason for returning 'morality' to the sphere of politics, to give up on consensus, to get rid of all the public in favour of the private property and the belief that the 'state has to adapt to market forces to survive' (ibid., 221). It is also wrong and futile to try and fight against market forces. 'Markets only understand powerful messages and a clear, defined line' (ibid., 91-92); and the markets measure the success of policies.

What is the logic of this line of reasoning? Why is it thought that all this would somehow follow from a particular understanding of the note crisis and related judgement on Kekkonen's era? Instead of an explication of the normative and factual premises, the argument works through rather implicit associations:

- (1) Kekkonen's guilt in note crisis is associated with repressive domestic consequences of Finland's Cold War neutrality.

- (2) The repressive domestic consequences of Finland's neutrality are associated with the welfare state and public control of some aspects of capitalist market economy.
- (3) The welfare state and public control of some aspects of capitalist market economy are associated with the Soviet system.
- (4) The Soviet system is associated with force, violence and evil.

As far as the repressive domestic consequences of Finland's Cold War neutrality are concerned, what was politically marginalized in Finland were anti-Soviet attitudes, particularly those that were in accordance with the Western ideologies of the Cold War and (4) above. By means of associations and binary negation, the qualified version of the Rautkallio interpretation of the note crisis is now taken to imply a deep commitment to (a neoliberal re-interpretation of) the Western identity and related interest in neoliberal restructuring of society in its entirety.

However characteristic this kind of associational thinking may be of the re-constitution of political identity and interests through interpretations of history, the argument is really rather weak. While (1) may perhaps or in part be defensible, at least as far as the connection of 'neutrality' and some rather mild forms of marginalisation of certain opinions are concerned, (2) and (3) are simply implausible. The welfare state did not cause repression in Virmavirta's sense and the Swedish social-democrats that provided the model for Finland were anti-communist.

(4) indicates the return of the Cold War -type Manichean thinking about good and evil in world politics. The politics of neutrality attempted to overcome this kind of Manicheanism by declaring that there is also a 'third way' (in line with the Swedish model). This may have linked the welfare state with the Cold War, as one of the many characteristic justifications of the welfare state was based on the Cold War binary opposition. However, this was only a reason for the welfare state, there were many other independent reasons for it, having to do with rational economic policy, class struggles, justice etc. Moreover, the notion of 'third way' goes against (4) while in no way implying anything resembling (3).

Other possible lessons from the note crisis

The ethico-political concern of those who have taken part in the R-S debate is based on rather simplistic assumptions about morality and politics. The choice is: either the logic of ‘political realism’ (which may also be valid after the end of the Cold War) or ‘the West is right’ (as History has now shown in a Hegelian manner). This binary opposition is only a variation of the dichotomies that constituted the transnational struggles in Finland and elsewhere during the Cold War, except that now the communists advocating the reverse Manicheanist view that the West is evil and the Soviet Union is good have disappeared. Thus post-Cold War politics in Finland – like in many other places – seems to have been based on the Cold War categories.

What is it then that we should learn from history and in this case particularly from the 1961 note crisis? Following the basic lines of Aristotelian tragedy, perhaps the focus should not be on whether particular actors were/are fundamentally good or evil? Rather historical episodes involve unintended consequences of action, *peripeteias*, recognitions and often pain and suffering, even in the midst of alleged success. Even more importantly, perhaps we should not focus only on events and actions but also on their structural underpinnings, that is on social relations constituted by various layers of discursive knowledge and generated by historically sedimented practices and institutions? Last but not least, we could also recognise the limits of drawing lessons from particular historical episodes. Perhaps a 1961 note crisis is of limited value in determining whether Finland, for instance, should be a NATO-member in the early 2000s? Indeed, contemporary ethico-political choices require the analysis of contemporary realities and issues.

From this perspective, perhaps the main lesson to be drawn from the note crisis stems from the moral dilemmas of ‘political realism’. The morality of ‘realism’ is based on the notion that statesmen making decisions have a responsibility for the *consequences of their policies*. At the core of also Kekkonen’s thinking⁶² was the distinction – famously made by Max Weber (1978) – between conviction and the ethics of responsibility (see also Smith 1986, 15-16). The ethics of conviction only cover

⁶² TC,214.

intentions and their ‘purity’, not at all the consequences of action (alleged examples include the Christian and Kantian ethics). The *ethics of responsibility covers the consequences of action*. Weber’s conviction [sic!] was that they alone are relevant in the world of politics that is ‘ethically irrational’. Weber wrote in his famous text ‘politics as a vocation’ that the ‘political leader’s honour, the leading statesman’s honour, lies precisely in the personal responsibility he holds for his actions, in the responsibility which he cannot nor should not deny or shift to another (ibid. 43). The responsible statesman calculates and accepts the consequences of his policies.

A real statesman admits the sense of responsibility. But what then defines the sense of responsibility? Was Stalin a true, responsible leader; did he have a sense of responsibility (to history and to coming generations)? And according to what criteria should the statesman judge the consequences of his actions? Were the consequences of the Vietnam war acceptable or not? The ‘realist’ Henry Kissinger believed that they were, but were his beliefs sufficient? Weber is unable to offer any answers to these questions because the only thing he finds important is that the responsible statesman calculates and accepts the consequences of his policies. (See *ibid.*, 48-53)

Daniel Warner (1991) has demonstrated that the subject and the object of the Weber ethic of responsibility is one and the same statesman. In other words, the statesman is responsible for the consequences of his policies only to himself and in accordance with his own values (which may apparently have a super-human origin as in the case of Weber’s example of Martin Luther; see *ibid.*, 14). With the Weberian notion of the ethic of responsibility, actually an autonomous social space is created for the ‘realist’ statesman in which *statesmen can do basically what they like*. The assumption that ‘the world is ethically irrational’ (or, in the christian terminology, ‘lapsed’) also legitimizes secrecy, whether that is the official secrecy of foreign policy and diplomacy, unofficial secrecy or a combination of the two. Warner (1991, 20-24) argues that in order to talk of X’s sense of responsibility, then X must be *responsible* (1) *for something* which presupposes publicly known norms and standards for his actions and situations and (2) for their *openness responsible to someone* which presupposes many other people and agents as well as the ability to respond to those different others, to their actions, to their criteria and to their criticisms. Moreover – also because of the essentially transnational nature of the ‘realist’ social space –

responsibility is not only responsibility within the borders of one's own state. The field of moral responsibility is wider than the field of actual political responsibility. (See Warner 1991,107-116)

From this perspective, the question arises: how legitimate are the 'realist' institutions including 'great powerness', spheres of interest, the balance of power, the practices of military alliance, collective security and the secret transnational practices of diplomacy and 'intelligence'? Like the characteristic Manicheanism and crusading tendencies of liberalism, these institutions well predate the Cold War and they also survived it, although not unchanged (modern institutions are in a constant flux). Critical questions about the 'realist' institutions lead to the analysis of the possibility of emancipation from the unwanted, unneeded and unnecessary institutions and replacing them with something more wanted, needed or empowering.

Instead of letting 'realist' practices delimit the area of free speech and democratic politics domestically, and instead of letting 'free speech' be equated with the reproduction of standard Western liberalism, the emancipatory task is to establish intersubjectively valid standards and mechanisms of transparency and democratic accountability on the actions of statesmen – and increasingly also stateswomen. The point is to open up new areas for discourse and to create the sort of democratic practices which 'realist' statesmen or -women cannot control (or would not even desire to control). This seems possible only by way of desecuritising issues and by building the conditions for a global security community, implying the quest to increase the self-transformative capacity of international and global contexts. In other words, what would have to be established is gradual extension and deepening of democratic control of regional or global governance, implying accountability and making peaceful changes of the rules and principles of governance easier.

The most far-reaching lesson of the note crisis seems thus to indicate the salience of the need to democratise global practices and mechanisms of power. However, an interpretation of the 1961 note crisis can only indicate the desirability but tell very little about the conditions for or feasibility of such developments. What is required is reflective and critical (political economy) analysis of contemporary mechanisms and processes, also from an explicitly normative point of view.

Conclusion

In the first part of the article I discussed Suomi's and Rautkallio's mimetic stories about the 1961 note crisis and the underpinnings of these stories. By using the same evidence, I argued that it is possible to write a very different mimetic story of these actions and events. In this alternative narrative, the emphasis is on (partial) ignorance, sudden reversals and recognitions, as well as – at a deeper level – on the unintended consequences and effects of power of 'realism' of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line.

In 1956-62, political life in Finland was characterised by transnational conflicts – usually entangled with secret diplomacy and intelligence, making these conflicts more strategic than truly political – about the extent to which Finland should be purely 'realist' on the lines of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line, and the extent to which Finland should have a clearer stand on the Manichaean fight between East and West. These struggles evoked also corruption, suspicions and conspiracy theories. 'Realism' won the battle, particularly after the note crisis. Although foreign policy was activated along somewhat Kantian lines in the late 1960s and early 1970s, openness did not improve significantly nor were foreign policy practices democratised.

After the end of the Cold War, lessons have been learned, but only in a narrow, reactionary way. Finland still inhabits a Cold War world, though now having emerged as a humble imitator of the 'West'. An alternative lesson would rather start with the quest to overcome the Cold War categories and to change at least some of the 'realist' practices and institutions that have survived also the end of the Cold War. Although this points towards importance of global democratisation, there are strict limits as to how much we can learn from a single episode such as the 1961 note crisis. What is needed is also a critical analysis of contemporary practices and mechanisms.

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