

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

**THEODORE SELLIN**

*Interviewed by: Tom Dunnigan*  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: Today is March 3, 2003. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Today I will be talking with Ted Sellin who was a Foreign Service officer for almost 30 years and had many interesting assignments. Ted is one of the few, if perhaps the only Foreign Service officer who served as an officer in four Scandinavian countries. Ted, why don't we begin by your telling me something about your background, your education, and so forth?*

SELLIN: Well, I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania of a Swedish father and a

Swedish-American mother. As a result, I had some exposure to the Swedish culture as I was growing up as a child.

*Q: You spoke the language as a child or you understood it?*

SELLIN: I understood some words. I didn't speak it. English was the language at home because my mother, born in Escanaba, Michigan, of two Swedish immigrant parents, her Swedish was Lutheran church Swedish. She knew a few hymns and such in Swedish. She didn't speak much Swedish as a youngster. So, I did not learn Swedish at home. But in any case, I grew up in Philadelphia, went to school in Philadelphia, and since my father was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, I was destined to go to the University of Pennsylvania where faculty brats got free tuition. But the year that I was to enter college, my father was invited by the Swedish government to work on a special royal commission to redraft the Swedish penal code, since he was a criminologist, penologist, and sociologist, and who of course spoke Swedish. So he took the family to Sweden in 1946. Since I had been theoretically enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania (I had a letter of acceptance) I was able to matriculate into the University of Upsala in Sweden, whereas my younger brothers had to go into high school and boarding school. So that was my first exposure to Sweden.

*Q: And perfecting your Swedish...*

SELLIN: Oh, I obviously had to learn Swedish, and Swedish is not a difficult language, basically, especially for someone who has English. I stayed in Upsala for two years and I would say that was the experience that made me think of doing something in the foreign affairs field, in diplomacy. Although my thoughts were still somewhat naive, I guess, but I had some connection with the American Embassy and saw a little bit of the social side of diplomacy, which was quite fun. So when I got back to the United States in 1948, I enrolled in Penn, and instead of going into engineering school which I had thought I would like to do, because I was an aviation buff, even had a student pilot's license at age 16 and thought I'd become an aeronautical engineer, I instead went into liberal arts and took the usual liberal arts curriculum...

*Q: Was this at Penn?*

SELLIN: Yes, at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. At that time, one of my professors was Robert Strausz-Hupe, who later was well known to the Foreign Service, after working as Barry Goldwater's foreign affairs adviser in his Presidential campaign, he had ambassadorships under the Republicans to Sri-Lanka, NATO, Sweden, Brussels and finally Turkey. He had a fascinating course on international relations which was jam-packed at the university. He was a very entertaining and good lecturer. So that helped steer me into the international affairs area, and I stayed on at Penn until 1952.

I took a master's degree with Strausz-Hupe in international relations with a seminar that had several people who later joined the Foreign Service and had distinguished careers. One was Tom Hirschfeld. Others were Dick Smyser and Wes Kriebel. So, in that respect,

it was a very interesting and entertaining way to look at the world, through Strausz-Hupe's eyes, as he was an old-school geopolitician.

In any case, I had a good friend, a classmate, who also was in the Foreign Service, named William Rex Crawford, Jr., deceased recently, whose father was a colleague of my father in the sociology department. Bill took the Foreign Service exams. He was a year ahead of me actually, although technically we were originally grade-school classmates. Somewhere along the line while I was in Sweden he had accelerated and gone to Harvard. He took the Foreign Service exams in 1950 and passed, then passed the orals and came into the Foreign Service. He was a very intelligent, bright guy, with a lot of talent in a variety of areas - languages, music. So it was a challenge. I decided I would take the exam. I took it in 1951 and passed, and passed the orals in summer of 1952. I was sworn into the Foreign Service during the A100 class in September, 1952.

*Q: One question: How did you stand with the military at that time?*

SELLIN: I was a little too young for WW II. Later I was granted deferments. For some reason, there was very little problem getting academic deferments in the Philadelphia area that we lived in. The draft board was quite lenient. I was given a deferment when I went abroad. When I came back home, and entered the University of Pennsylvania, I went into the ROTC.

*Q: Ah, yes.*

SELLIN: So, and then, strange to say, since I was accelerating my academic course, (I was trying to get my BA in 3 years, which I succeeded in doing). I was not able to join the advanced ROTC segment, the additional two years, because for some reason the Army insisted that you be in undergraduate status while you were in the ROTC program for the full four years. I was not allowed to continue the ROTC program, and that was, as luck would have it, 1950, and the outbreak of the Korean war. So I got my draft call. I reported and took my physical, was classified 1-A, and told to prepare for induction. Lo and behold, there was realization that if they really enforced the draft in the academic world, they would wipe out some of the undergraduate classes. So at that very moment, the powers-that-be cooked up an academic deferment program and I qualified. So I have never served in the military. And, incidentally, when I came to Washington in 1952, I assumed that I would get a deferment because I was joining the government service, I was going abroad. But I was told that I would have to apply. The State Department was no help in that regard, but they would certify that I was an officer serving in the Foreign Service. So, with that, I mailed this information to my draft board and they granted me a deferment.

Now, in a curious sidestep to this, if I may, Jim Goodby, who was also in my A100 course, coming from a small town in New Hampshire, got a draft notice while in A100. As a matter of fact, if I can digress a little bit more, he joined the Air Force. I think he enlisted before the final draft call came. He went on to the Air Force, stayed there for a few years as an officer, and came back not to the Department but to the AEC. He had an

unusual background, coming into the A100 with a dual Masters degree from Harvard in international relations and geology. The latter, especially, making him of interest to the Atomic Energy Commission. He eventually rejoined the Foreign Service later in his career. He came in as, I believe, perhaps as a reserve officer, and in any case he was the first one of us A100s to reach the old FS0 2 senior service rank.

*Q: I didn't realize quite then that he'd started at the A100...*

SELLIN: That's right.

*Q: He's a fine officer...*

SELLIN: Surely is, and also was an ambassador to Finland.

*Q: That's right. Now, you were in the A100 course at the time that McCarthyism was riding high in Washington; did that have any affects that you could see on your training or on how things were being handled?*

SELLIN: No, I don't think so. I didn't observe anything in the actual training course. That was fairly straightforward. But you could sense it around you in the department itself as we were going on. We were, of course, quite innocent of all that, a lot of that... the inner workings of department at the time. We read about them later, and I've run across records of departmental anguish and even fecklessness at the time in my current retirement work with the Freedom of Information Act. But, I would say that the only thing that I observed then was that there was a certain degree of uncertainty as to how this would play out as we went abroad. We were the last A100 course to graduate under the Truman administration. By the time we left, of course, he and Dean Acheson were lame ducks. In fact, we were addressed by Dean Acheson as a group. We went up to see him in his office, and he was quite down in the dumps, I would say. And subsequently, before we left, John Foster Dulles was presented to the state department employees and there was a grandstand, well not a grandstand, but a platform or something in the parking between what was then State and the row of houses where the FSI was on D Street, and he came in charging and was really quite remonstrating, if that's the word I want, to his future employees including the new Foreign Service officers.

*Q: That was the Positive Loyalty speech, wasn't it?*

SELLIN: Yes, that was it.

*Q: Well, at the end of your A100 course, you received your assignment to Copenhagen.*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: Were you pleased with that?*

SELLIN: Yes, and no, strange to say... I had put Stockholm as my first choice on the wish list that we all had, and the department was really very accommodating in sending

me to Copenhagen. I'd been to Copenhagen a couple of times during my two years in Sweden. It was all right, but I really thought, by that time I spoke very good Swedish, and could not comprehend how the State Department couldn't take a young officer who spoke that language and send them there. I was a bit naive, but as it turned out, of course, I evolved and the stationing in Denmark turned out to be a really very fine one, and I was delighted. I should add here, as a postscript, that in fact throughout my 30 years I always put Stockholm somewhere on my wish list, and although I have served in four of the Scandinavian or Nordic nations, I never got Stockholm.

*Q: You got Sweden, but not Stockholm.*

SELLIN: I eventually got Göteborg, difficult to pronounce in English, but with a venerable international transliteration of Gothenburg. But I never got Stockholm.

*Q: What was the atmosphere in Denmark when you arrived?*

SELLIN: It was interesting because two things had happened that were very unpopular, well three things, including eventually the ramifications of McCarthyism, among other things that famous Shine and Cohn investigation of the USIS library. I remember...

*Q: I had to greet them both in London.*

SELLIN: Yes, well they came to Copenhagen as well. First of all, I would say that on arrival in Denmark I was quite astonished when I found that the Danes could not comprehend how the Americans had elected Dwight D. Eisenhower as President. They admired him a great deal. They'd given him the Order of the Dannebro, he has an escutcheon in Frederiksborg Castle, in the church there along with that of Marshal Montgomery. But they couldn't understand how an intellectual like Adlai Stevenson, so far superior brainwise, how the electorate wouldn't have elected him. And the other thing was the execution of convicted Soviet atomic spies, the Rosenbergs. That occurred as I recall sometime in the first six months or year I was there, and there was a lot of demonstration against that. But, basically, I found the Danes themselves to be very forthcoming. During my consular work there in the first year, they went along with all of the odious visa procedures that the McCarran Act had just put into effect.

*Q: You were a consular officer there.*

SELLIN: In the first year. I was there for three and a half years for a variety of reasons and I spent the majority of my time during the latter part in the political section, and stayed in the political cone ever since. But I came to Copenhagen with the McCarran Act under my arm, and it had been in effect since December 25, 1952, and I started issuing visas in January 3, 1953. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

SELLIN: So there was no...

*Q: With the Act right beside you...*

SELLIN: Right. There were no regs, no instructions, nothing to help us. It was kind of interesting trying to figure out how to apply the Act properly. Of course, there were Danish Nazi sympathizers who were trying to get to the States because they were not welcome in Denmark, and things like that. But, basically, the other thing was the oath that visa applicants all had to take denying any connection with Communism. I swore that oath, I took that oath from these Danes who were of all ranks and station in life; they all had to come in and get fingerprinted and raise their hand and swear that they weren't going to overthrow the US government. That was introduced in the McCarran Act as a requirement, it did not exist under the former acts, I don't think, but it certainly was a demeaning experience in my opinion for these people to have to go through.

*Q: Fingerprinting for all Europeans is a very distasteful process. They don't like it.*

SELLIN: I know, I understand that. I sympathize. Oh, the other interesting thing on the consular side was the first well-known transvestite who was operated on in Copenhagen.

*Q: Jorgensen or something like that?*

SELLIN: Chris later Christine Jorgensen. And that happened just before I got there, but there were some questions that came up about his passports and things like that that needed some attention. Actually, as vice consul I didn't deal with that directly. This was dealt with by a consul himself.

*Q: [laughter] Yes.*

SELLIN: It was Red Duggan, incidentally. But that did lead to another case, a similar one, that occurred on my watch, so that was one of the more unusual aspects of the consular work there.

*Q: Annoying, but...*

SELLIN: No, but just unusual.

*Q: Unusual. What was the Communist influence in Denmark in those days?*

SELLIN: I don't recall it being particularly large. The party was, I can't now remember exactly the percentage in the parliament. They had parliamentary representation, and they were making some trouble in the unions and other certain areas of that kind, but I don't recall them as being particularly threatening to the political system. As you know from your years in Denmark, it's virtually impossible to get a majority government in Denmark, so there were all kinds of coalitions, but the Communists, to my recollection, at least while I was there, never got a seat in government. So they were pretty much isolated politically.

*Q: Did they try to penetrate the Social Democrats like they do in so many places?*

SELLIN: I guess so. As you may remember, in 1956, the invasion of Hungary by the Soviets really tore the Communist party apart. Aksel Larsen himself, who was the leader of the Communist Party, quit and formed his own left Socialist group. No, I think the Danes weren't terribly troubled by the Communist influence at that time.

*Q: And what about the Soviet presence and influence?*

SELLIN: Well, they had a large embassy there. I'm sure they were hard at work. The embassy was just across the graveyard from where our new embassy was built while I was there. It's hard to say. I don't really, again, recall much in the way of a Soviet effort. There were no large demonstrations against them that I can recall, except the one at the time of the Hungarian invasion, and that one came actually toward the end of my tour there. And that turned a lot of people against the Russians and their home-grown Communists as well. The Communists, incidentally, while we are on the subject of the consular issue - one of the more famous Danes who was a Communist during the war, in the underground, was a man named Mogens Fog. He was a medical doctor and was one of the underground heroes. He also was refused visas to the United States because he was a Communist. At one point, he came in to apply for one while I was there, and I had to turn him down. But it turned out that he earlier had visited the States, and we fished up an earlier application and he'd been issued a visa on instructions from a previous ambassador. I think we eventually got a waiver for him. Because by then he was no longer a member of the Party, Parenthetically, he went on eventually to become what the Nordics entitle the "Rectormagnificus" of the Copenhagen University.

*Q: I thought so, yes.*

SELLIN: He was very prominent in academia.

*Q: That's an embarrassing situation, trying to turn someone down who's already had a visa.*

SELLIN: Yes. But in terms of the politics, no. The Communists were marginalized. We were talking about the Russians. We can only assume that they were doing whatever they do in circumstances like this. They certainly didn't have the kind of influence that they had in Finland, for example, where they played a fairly important role but not dominant role in domestic or international affairs.

*Q: I'm sure that the Danes by this time in the mid-'50s had recognized the Red Chinese, hadn't they?*

SELLIN: Yes, they had. In fact, I remember at one point, the DCM, a fellow by the name of Fritz Jandry, who was Charge at the time, was invited out to Rebild, that would be the Danish-American Fourth of July celebration, at Aarhus, Jutland.

*Q: Yes.*



SELLIN: And the organizers out there had put him right next to the Chinese ambassador. I asked him later how he had dealt with that, and he said, "Well, I simply ignored him." [laughter] You sit there for hours you know, looking the other way. So, that's true, they had recognized them. Also, they had a hospital ship off South Korea during the Korean War period. That stayed on a while and it came back, as I recall, while I was in Copenhagen. It came back for... well, it was given back to the shipping company that had created it, outfitted it. So that was their contribution, basically.

*Q: What was your main job in the political sector, if you can characterize any major ops.*

SELLIN: Well, I was junior officer, by this time I spoke and read Danish. I certainly read it without any hindrance. I fractured my Swedish into a sort of passable Danish. My chief at the time was Luke Battle, Dean Acheson's former personal assistant and assigned to Copenhagen as an Attache of Embassy to get him out of harm's way in DC. A marvelous boss who handled all of the important contacts. So, basically I was supposed to read the newspapers and report on political gatherings, attend Parliament and report, and such like. Also had some low-level contacts in the Foreign Ministry, and with the Greenland department. We had a lot to do with the Danes on issues involving Thule Air Force Base. They were building...

*Q: I wanted to ask you about Greenland, yes...*

SELLIN: I never got there, but while I was in Copenhagen, Greenland did occupy a fair amount of our time, because we were constantly dealing with the problem of radio frequencies, of all things. We had to send numerous diplomatic notes. Every time they were changing a frequency up in Greenland, the U.S. Military, we had to get approval. There was a lot of that kind of work that the political section was doing at that time. And we were also building the BMEWS, the large over the horizon radar network. Since Danish contractors were involved there, we got a little bit involved in that as well.

*Q: But I arrived in Denmark... I remember the first problem we had was fisheries off Greenland, because some of our fisherman were getting into waters that the Danes didn't want them in. We had an awful problem for a while, but we settled it finally.*

SELLIN: I wasn't involved in fisheries at that time. The other event up in the outlying areas that occupied my last weeks in Copenhagen, a month, maybe, was the Klaksvig disturbance... what term was it... it wasn't an uprising... but the Faeroe Islands...

*Q: I was going to ask you about the Faeroes, again...*

SELLIN: Again, I never got there, but it was a very interesting revolt of the fisherman, basically, but not against other fisheries so much as against the local authorities. I had to write some reports on that. But it wasn't resolved until after I left. But it was an unusual experience for the stolid Danes.

*Q: Oh, yes!*

SELLIN: They had a riot on their hands in one of their possessions.

*Q: Well, some people were coming along in your time who became quite well known later, like Jens Otto Krag and others.*

SELLIN: Yes. I'd met him but I didn't know him. We didn't have any serious contact with him. You would see his wife in the movies. His wife was a movie star, and a very popular one in those days. So he came on the scene essentially after I had left. In fact, all of the names of the people who are current are people that I had no knowledge of at the time. There were a few young Foreign Service officers who went on to very high posts in the Danish Foreign Ministry or abroad. Many of those had served here in Washington after leaving the junior jobs in the Foreign Ministry and I got to know some of them here when I was stationed here. Later Ambassador to the U.S., Peder Dyvig, is one who was here in the '70s; also Benny Mogensen, who later was Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry. So those are the ones that I had some contact with.

*Q: What about the Danish military in those years? They'd joined NATO. They'd never been, in recent times, a militaristic country. Did they put up their share or did we have to keep working on that?*

SELLIN: That was a constant problem as I recall, at that time, and probably still today. They were never particularly anxious to... well they claimed they couldn't afford to pay the kind of defense costs that we were trying to get NATO countries to make, to carry their fair share of the burden. And the big issue when I was there was the length of the conscription tour of duty. We were pushing for 24 months at the time, which was the American conscription period. And the Danes didn't do it; they just never had a 24-month conscription while I was there. In fact, they were going to cut it from 18 months to 12, and there was a lot of push and pull on that with us. So in that sense, the Danes fell short of what we thought would be the proper burden sharing, in a sense, both in terms of conscript time and funds. There was also, I discovered later... I wasn't privy to it at the time... but I discovered later that there was a lot going on about a NATO cooperation issue that both Norway and Denmark were involved in. That was our effort to get air bases in Denmark proper (and Norway) to station U.S. fighter aircraft and permit bombers returning from a nuclear attack on Russia, if they ever could return, for sanctuary, or not sanctuary so much as a place to land where they could then refuel and fly on. And later, the Danes, despite a lot of bargaining that went on, the Danes never agreed. Nor did the Norwegians. Basically, the Danes were getting the important NATO umbrella protection on the cheap. But I think they were concerned about Russian reaction. Certainly the Norwegians were. The Danes were right there on the East German border, and the Russians had briefly occupied the island of Bornholm after the war. So there was always that little concern that part, maybe all, of their territory would again be at risk.

*Q: And the Russian ambassador was probably reminding them of those things too.*

*[laughter]*

SELLIN: [laughter] yes.

*Q: So, Ted, after your years in Copenhagen, you were brought back to Washington.*

SELLIN: Correct, in the summer of 1956.

*Q: To serve in the Bureau of Intelligence Research, where you concentrated on British West Africa.*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: And there was a lot of British West Africa, because that was before the days of independence.*

SELLIN: Well, indeed. I was assigned to work on British West Africa, that area. It was the period when the Gold Coast gained its independence...

*Q: And became Ghana.*

SELLIN: And became Ghana. So there was quite a lot of interest in it, actually, and the Nigerians... I was out of that job when Nigeria became independent and then the Congo. But it was a time of turmoil, certainly. It wasn't quite the job that I would have preferred.

*Q: No, well it seems to me and out of...*

SELLIN: Out of cone, out of area, yes.

*Q: Out of phase...*

SELLIN: And frankly, I don't think the department utilized its personnel appropriately then. I spent virtually the whole time, about a year and a half, that I was there, working on National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) on parts of West Africa. And I had never been to West Africa.

*Q: I was going to say, did you travel out there?*

SELLIN: Oh, no. They couldn't scrounge up enough money to send me out there. So I felt that I was working in a vacuum, trying to prepare these NIE segments. And of course preparation eventually went over to the CIA, but until then we were toiling on their behalf, and the CIA got the credit when the NIEs were finally published or finalized. But I soldiered on.

At one point, after about a year there, the FSI was advertising for language training in Finnish, a hard language. I'd never been to Finland during the two years that I was in

Sweden. So I applied for Finnish language training. I was not admitted to it because they already had someone in training.

*Q: They had their quota...*

SELLIN: They had their quota for that year. So I got more and more involved in the African affairs, and as time progressed, I thought, why not? Let's give it a shot. So, I didn't reapply, since the department had put out a bulletin saying that all outstanding applications for hard language training were void. If you were interested, apply again. So, I did not apply again. I decided, what the heck, I'll see what will happen. The African Bureau was just being established, we were opening consulates and embassies everywhere, and it looked like it could be an interesting area to work in. But lo and behold, the following year, I was assigned to Finnish language training.

*Q: They found you. You didn't find them.*

SELLIN: No, it was a little more than that...

*Q: Before we get into Finnish language training... may I ask you a few more questions about your... I'd like to finish up on this...*

SELLIN: Sure.

*Q: What were the principal U.S. interests in British West Africa? Were there any great interests?*

SELLIN: Not to my knowledge. I mean we were, there was an airfield, that was in Niger, Roberts Field?

*Q: Yes, that was in Liberia. But had they oil in Nigeria at this time?*

SELLIN: No.

*Q: Not yet.*

SELLIN: No, No. There was no oil there at all. Cocoa and Ground nuts were the major export of Ghana. So I think it was just part of the cold war syndrome, basically, as was so much of what we did in that period. It was just there and it was becoming independent and we had to have representation there.

*Q: Were your contacts within the department basically with BNA, the British area, or with NEA, which was then covering Africa... or both?*

SELLIN: I had no contact with BNA even though it included the Nordic countries. In fact, just as an aside, I was never assigned a Washington job that dealt with Scandinavia. They were always trying to reshape me [laughter] and this was one of those efforts. I

never worked in the Nordic area in Washington.

*Q: I was thinking of the British relations with their African colonies. Did you have anybody on the British desk take any interest?*

SELLIN: No, we were working basically with the new African Bureau.

*Q: The new African Bureau. That's what I wanted to ask too...*

SELLIN: In fact, the African branch in INR was a part of NEA, at the time. So I had no contact with the British side of it or anything else.

*Q: What was your feeling, Ted, about the prospects for these newly developed, newly independent countries, as you left INR. Did you think they were going to make it or not?*

SELLIN: Well I wasn't working on them long enough to have any particular feel for that, though I can tell you that we put a fair amount of effort into Ghana and the Gold Coast. I think that there was a genuine hope that somehow this would function and there would be genuine democracy. And, of course, as you know, even though we didn't have the dealings with the British *per se*, in the early days of these newly independent countries, the British were really the governing party. I mean every minister had a British counterpart. His chef du cabinet would be a Brit or a Canadian. I met several of these later in my career, who asserted that the high points of their careers was when they were the deputy minister of something or other in Nigeria, or Ghana...

*Q: Togo, or somewhere else.*

SELLIN: Yes, any of the former British colonies. But, I must also say that we were, of course, working on what would be predictions of independence schedules. Who would be next and how long would it take? And this is one of the things we had to report on, and try to figure out. I can say unequivocally that we had no idea that Nigeria would by 1961 be in such turmoil. There was a general thought in our African Bureau at the time, that, okay, Ghana is a first. Nigeria second. There was a famous plan, a British one called the Lugard Plan, which the British were trying to implement, by which Nigeria was going to proceed slowly but surely toward independence; it had something to do with partitioning the country, and how to work out the problems with the Muslims in the North and the other populations and in Nigeria. This was 1957, I guess, when we thought Nigeria might become independent in ten years. I had sitting across from me in the office Bill Canup who was the Francophone Africa specialist. So when we came to discuss the Congo even he hadn't had any idea, except that it would probably take decades before the Congo would become independent, so we were all off base, at least in our little office, in INR, about the evolution of the African independence movements.

*Q: Came on like a hurricane, didn't it?*

SELLIN: It sure did.

*Q: 1960...*

SELLIN: It was really astonishing.

*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: You are under the gun alone all the time.*

SELLIN: And then I was sent to the University of Indiana for an academic year to the Russian studies program.

*Q: They have an excellent Russian program there.*

SELLIN: They did, at the time... I haven't kept up with it... but they had a couple of well-known professors in the field. Robert Tucker being one, associated with the department, and a man named Burns, I forget his first name, it wasn't John Burns, who was the head of the department and very well respected. And they also had a Finnish program but I didn't really have time to get involved in that because I was taking a regular academic study program which the department wanted me to take, and the professor who was the program was on sabbatical! So I had a lapse of another nine months where I didn't speak very much Finnish. I think the department should have reversed that. They should have sent me to university first and then sent me to language training...

*Q: Language training at the end.*

SELLIN: But that's how that worked. I developed a reasonable knowledge of the language and stayed there quite a while.

*Q: You could read the newspapers, and things like that?*

SELLIN: Not as well as I would have liked. One thing about the Finnish language, and I'm not making this as an excuse because there have been other officers who didn't know other Nordic languages who did quite well with Finnish, but they also didn't go to the university after the language training, they went straight out to Finland. Yes, it is a difficult language.

*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 60<sup>th</sup> 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 Gufler 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: Well, that was a good and lengthy tour, five years, and it made sense after your Finnish language training. But then you came back to the Department to something totally different, to the Office of International Conferences, I believe.*

SELLIN: That's right. I don't know why I got that job particular job. I had never worked on Nordic affairs in Washington, and thought such might be logical follow-on assignment. But the director of OIC had been DCM in Helsinki well before I got there and he saw that I was coming out of Helsinki, and I guess he thought, what the hell, he'd recruit me. So I spent a couple of years in the Office of International Conferences.

*Q: What were your duties there?*

SELLIN: I was what they call a Program Officer, and essentially I had to make sure that when the agendas for various international meetings were prepared our interests were reflected in them. I was involved in selecting U.S. delegations, which was interesting because we had absolutely no clout in that office, but we did have money.

*Q: Ah hah!*



SELLIN: So we were able to

*Q: The lifeblood...*

SELLIN: Exactly. And we were under strict directions to reduce the number of people going abroad, but to make way for political appointees. Johnson was President then.

*Q: Yes, this was in '64. This would have been President Johnson. Oh my.*

SELLIN: Correct. So that was interesting. For example, we would have a delegation going off on a Sunday night to go to Paris to an oil committee meeting of the OECD, and we'd get a word from the White House on Thursday and even Friday that, oh, so-and-so, the CEO of this or that oil company should be put on the delegation as a public member, at his own expense, although he didn't know that part yet. So we'd have to scramble around and amend our delegation lists. And they'd come in and we'd chat them up. It was quite interesting. The one thing they wanted, almost to a man, was a diplomatic passport. And we couldn't give them. I remember one of them came up to me one morning as we were getting them ready to leave the following day, and I said, "Can we help you with a hotel?" And he said, "Oh, no, I'm staying at the White House tonight." But anyhow, I did get a couple of nice trips out of that. I had a long stint in London with an IMCO conference, and a long stint in Geneva with the ILO, both of which were in my bailiwick.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

SELLIN: Otherwise, it was a fairly routine, administrative type of job.

*Q: Who was the chief of the office at the time?*

SELLIN: Cunningham was there for a while. And then he left, and then another FSO came...

*Q: I want to say Hillary Cunningham, but I'm not sure...*

SELLIN: No, it's not that... I think it was Hugh Cunningham... but anyhow, he was later Consul General in Quebec, which I think was his last tour. In any case, there were FSOs, or two or three of them.

*Q: Well, it doesn't matter. At the end of those several years, in 1967 you were assigned to Oslo.*

SELLIN: Correct. This was part of a design to get out of what I felt was a fairly humdrum job. My orders originally read Four-Year Tour in Washington, two in this job and then two in some other job if I wanted it. So, at the end of the two years, this is where I thought I'd finally get a crack at a Washington Nordic assignment and I had virtually everything lined up. I had the ambassador to Sweden, who was a good friend of my father's; I had my former DCM in Helsinki, who was a good friend, in BNA as office

director; a former ambassador in Oslo who was a very nice lady, Margaret Joy Tibbetts...

*Q: Oh, yes.*

SELLIN: She was a senior DAS in EUR, and so on. I had all these things all lined up to get into the BNA office, for two years. And this very nice guy, who was my boss, called me into his the office, and said, "Ted, I understand you are looking for another job." I said, "Yes, it's two years and two years, that's what it said on the orders." He said, "You know, Ted, I really..." And basically, I had it lined up. He said, "You know, I hate to do this, but I'm not going to release you from this job." I said, "Why?" He said, "We have had such turnover, that you're the only guy who can provide any continuity in this office." So, I said, very deeply disappointed, "Okay, fine, So, whatever." I didn't put up a fuss. But I began looking around for other escapes... [laughter]

*Q: Sure...[laughter]*

SELLIN: And six months to a year later, I was approached by the European Labor advisor in EUR, to see if I was interested in going to Oslo as Labor Attaché, which was becoming vacant, and I said, "Sure! Love to." So that evolved. I went over... At one point... I'd never really gone out as an attaché. I'd previously been a labor reporting officer, so I was just going my merry way, preparing to go, and the labor advisor said to me, Dan Goott, at the time, he said, "Well, have you been over to the AFL-CIO yet?" I said, "No." He said, "You'd better get your ass over there." So I made an appointment to see Jay Lovestone.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

SELLIN: The infamous Jay Lovestone.

*Q: Yes.*

SELLIN: Who, as you know, in his youth was a Communist, and was a very influential labor advisor to George Meany. So, I went over to see him, and had an appointment, and spent half an hour chatting with him. Since I didn't know that much about the Norwegian labor situation, we talked about the Finnish labor situation. So, I worked my way back to the office, and there was a note on my desk to call Dan Goott, the labor advisor. So I called him, and he said, "Ted, what in the devil did you say to Jay Lovestone?" I said, "We just discussed the Finnish labor movement." He says, "I just got a curious call from him saying 'who the hell is this radical left-winger you are sending out to Oslo?'"

*Q: [laughter]*

SELLIN: He thought I was a Communist. I went anyhow...

*Q: [laughter] That was probably a mark of approbation for you, in most people's view.*

SELLIN: Could be. Anyhow, so I went out there and did the labor work. But it wasn't full time. Because I could easily fracture my Swedish into Norwegian, I did a lot of coverage of the Parliament stuff and all the political reporting, essentially. Because the other half of the office in Oslo was really the Pol/Mil half, staffed by Rozanne Ridgway, later ambassador to Finland and East Germany and assistant secretary for European Affairs.

*Q: Assistant secretary... a very fine woman.*

SELLIN: Yes indeed. She was doing the Pol/Mil work. I was senior to her in rank, as a matter of fact, at that time. But never again. Our boss was Bob Hennemeyer, a long-time German hand with whom I later, in 1975, bought a sailboat which we still own today!

*Q: But you were in the political section as such.*

SELLIN: Yes, and as I mentioned I did all the political reporting, plus the labor work. She and the boss did the NATO multilateral things, I was there for three and a half years, had a child born there, a son, and we enjoyed it. The Norwegians are very sociable, once you get to know them. They are a little hard to crack when on their home turf, but once you get to know them, and they get to know you, they form fast friendships that continue for many, many years afterwards.

*Q: You were there in some of the worst days of the Vietnam War.*

SELLIN: Yes.

*Q: What effect did that have?*

SELLIN: That had a considerable effect. The counter Vietnam movement was not as rabid as it was in Stockholm. I think in Sweden they got the brunt of it. Some in Oslo, but in Sweden it was considerable. It was fairly well organized in Norway, but rather small. It really never caught on to the extent that it did in Sweden. In a specific way, our embassy was quite exposed on a main street, and it was a triangular building and there were guards at each corner. But King's Park was right across the way and from time to time students and anti-Vietnam rallies would come charging out of the park carrying a stone or something and smash windows. We were getting windows smashed with some regularity. Margaret Joy Tibbetts was the ambassador at the time and she had the standing rule that the Norwegians would have those windows fixed by rush hour in the morning, since the attacks usually occurred at night. We'd stocked the special Belgium glass for this particular building, which was an Eero Saarinen design, a Finnish-American architect. The Norwegians would have to call up a glazier in the middle of the night and get him out and get those windows up at their expense, not our expense.

But there was a radical student movement in Norway as well as everywhere else, and they were agitating. Papandreou, the Greek who had spent quite a bit of time there and eventually settled in Stockholm, had his headquarters there. There was also at the same

time a lot of unhappiness about US and the Greek junta, so it wasn't all anti-Vietnam, it was also anti-Greek junta as well. And also the Black Panthers came from time to time.

*Q: Bobby Searle and boys...*

SELLIN: I don't think Huey Newton came, but Bobby Seale came a couple of times. And the Norwegian Student Association would sponsor these speakers and things like that. So, yes, it was there, but it wasn't anywhere near as vocal or as strong as it was in other parts of the world. I think basically, dig deep down, most Norwegians knew that NATO was a shield, and they might not like some of the things that we were doing, but what's the alternative?

*Q: They liked the shield, yes. What was the Soviet influence in the labor movement, if any?*

SELLIN: That's an interesting question. That's a hard one to answer basically, because they were certainly entertaining some of the left wing, the splinter group that I mentioned in Finland was mirrored by a Socialist left splinter group. There had been a bad fire in the Norwegian coal mine in Svalbard (Spitzbergen) in the Barents Sea. As a result of that, there was a lot of anti-government, pro-safety agitation, and this radical left in the labor party in Norway seized on this to withdraw and create a left wing splinter group. It was small but vigorous ginger element in Norwegian left wing politics throughout the time...

*Q: A burr in your saddle, eh?*

SELLIN: Also, I'm not answering your question specifically, yet, but it was interesting to be there at the time I was in the labor slot because the labor party, shortly after I got there, had been voted out. A center coalition, I forget whether it was the liberals or the conservatives at the time, but the center party held the premiership and did for a number of years while I was there, and was eventually replaced by a conservative prime minister. (End of tape)

So the Labor Party was out of power, and was for the bulk of the time I was there. This had the consequence of my being not only the principal contact with all of the labor organizations, but also major echelons of the labor party, because the ambassadors and the political section in principle dealt mainly with the government. So I had unusual access to the former prime minister, and the coming prime minister, and a former foreign minister, the coming foreign minister, several of the people who later, when the Socialist labor party came back into power after I'd left, were in the highest levels of government.

*Q: Is that like Mr. Bratteli and people like that?*

SELLIN: Trygve Bratteli - I got to know him quite well, and Nordli. Some of my contacts had been professional diplomats who were later seconded to the labor movement, especially around the time of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO when there was concern that if a plebiscite were demanded that the Norwegians might vote against continuing membership. I said earlier that they recognized what NATO meant to Norway,

but there was always that left wing opposition, and we and many Norwegians were a little concerned about how that referendum would play out. So, anyway, a diplomat who was later foreign minister, Knut Frydenlund, was working in the labor movement central organization (LO) at that time to make sure that a groundswell of opinion would not force a plebiscite and he succeeded. The decision was made by a successful parliamentary vote that Norway would not withdraw from NATO. Another younger Foreign Service officer who was also detailed to the LO, was Torvald Stoltenberg, who later on became the defense minister and foreign minister and his 40-year-old son was until recently the Labor prime minister of Norway.

So it did give me an opportunity to tap into sources that other officers didn't, and it made the work quite interesting as a result. That NATO plebiscite, as I say, didn't occur. Later on, just as I was leaving Norway, there was referendum that was called that was to decide whether they should join the EC. That one they lost, it did go to a plebiscite, and the Norwegians opted to refrain from joining the European Union.

*Q: Talk a little bit about NORDEC, whatever that was.*

SELLIN: [laughter]

*Q: That was the supposed union of the Scandinavian countries, visa, as opposed to the EEC, I would guess.*

SELLIN: I guess so, I'm trying to remember. I wasn't doing much economic reporting, but it was an effort to try and create a Nordic economic cooperation structure. And it didn't work, and I frankly can't recall why it didn't work, but I think that some of the Nordic countries, including Norway, weren't that interested in it. Basically, however, the Norwegians were... well I don't quite know how to put this... the Norwegians were pro-Western, certainly. They were quite, you know, I won't say egotistical, but they were quite self-assured. And, one of the things that happened on my watch there was the discovery of oil in the North Sea, with its ramifications for a robust future economy.

*Q: I wanted to ask you, had they discovered oil?*

SELLIN: They were drilling for it when I got there, and by the second year or so, they had found the first oil field. Of course, that changed the Norwegian situation considerably.

*Q: Yes.*

SELLIN: Unfortunately, I must say... I can't say fortunately, but as a matter of fact, the discovery of oil did not make Norway perhaps one of the richest countries in the world. For some reason, not being an economist I'm not exactly sure why, this discovery of oil had an adverse effect on the cost of living and costs rose spectacularly in subsequent years. on top of which the government imposed, as all the Nordic countries do now, a VAT, value added tax, so the cost of living in Norway is sky high. Oslo is one of the

most expensive cities in the world to live in, partly in relation to this oil. One thing that they are doing with this oil, however, is directing a certain percentage of the revenues to an escrow account to essentially allow the welfare state to continue after the oil dries up.

*Q: Yes.*

SELLIN: I know that there are economists who claim that this is not the smartest thing to do, but in any case that's what they're doing. I don't know what the outcome of that will be in due course, because they keep discovering oil there.

*Q: Is all the oil offshore, or is some of it onshore?*

SELLIN: All of it is offshore, and they're beginning to drill further and further North, even exploring in the Barents Sea area. Environmentalists everywhere, as in Norway, are not too pleased with some of the drilling. In fact, when they discovered oil at the Ekofisk Field, as I think it was called, it was declared that no permits would be given for drilling above a parallel that was halfway up the coast of Norway. Because of the fisheries up there, there were possibilities of damage to the stocks. Recently new permits have been given opening new "blocs" further north and the expansion of drilling seems inexorable.

*Q: Are the Russians up there?*

SELLIN: Yes, the Russians are up there too. The Barents Sea boundaries are in dispute. Russians claim a historical line going due North. The Norwegians claim a straight line drawn at 90° from a shore baseline, which creates a pie shaped segment of the sea, the "Grey area", which has, I believe, prevented exploitation so far.

*Q: And it's not a Florida climate up there either.*

SELLIN: No it isn't. But someone is certainly going to get up there and drill someday. Norway has already become one of the major exporters of oil in the world today.

*Q: Now you were in Norway during the Six-Day War in the Middle East. Did that have any effect in Norway?*

SELLIN: No. I was going to Norway. I didn't get to Norway until November. That was in June.

*Q: That was in June, yes. You missed it.*

SELLIN: As an aside, my wife and I were going to the Virgin Islands for a one-week holiday that summer. She'd never been there and I'd never been there. So, we left Washington, arrived in St. Croix, and there was the newspaper stating "war started," so we scrambled around to get the newspapers every day. The New York Times would come late in the day, and we're following it not knowing whether it would blow up into a world war. When we left six days later, the war was over, got back to humdrum

Washington. [laughter]

*Q: No war. [laughter]*

SELLIN: So I was out of the country, I was out of Washington during that period. But when we got to Norway, we found that the Norwegian attitude toward the Israelis was quite interesting. There was considerable sympathy for the Israelis in Norway. But that did erode as time went on, and popular sympathies seemed to me to switch to the Arab Palestinian cause. Of course, some years later, there was a real dust up when Israeli intelligence agents in Lillehammer assassinated a Tunisian... the wrong man, not the one they were trying to eliminate.

*Q: I think it was a Jordanian...*

SELLIN: Could be, so that soured the popular attitude toward the Israelis considerably. But there was a lot of sympathy after the war, and still when I was there.

*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.*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: In 1973, where you were brought into...*

SELLIN: Well, actually, I was retransferred to the department, but came back essentially without an assignment. Again. Because I had to leave to make way for this other fellow in the language pipeline. And the personnel system, being what it is, still in two years hadn't figured out what to do with me. So I was walking the halls and bumped into George Vest, who had been the head of the little prep com delegation for the CSCE in Helsinki. So, when he heard that I was out of work, he insisted that I join him in Geneva on the delegation to the plenary session of the CSCE, which I did. It was very kind of him. So I went there and was getting organized. I was just getting my feet wet, so to speak, when I got a phone call from personnel and asked if I would be willing to go to the Naval War College. And I said, "Yes, but this is October. Haven't they started already?" And he said, "Well, yes, but this is a special case. We need..." This was Don Norland whom I know... So I said, "Listen, Don, I was actually... last year when I was in Helsinki, I was asked to fill out one of those projections of where you expect your career to be in ten years. I had put in that projection that when I finished the tour of duty in Helsinki, I'd be right for political counselor at a larger Embassy, maybe DCM at a smaller one, or a war college assignment. And since I would be coming from abroad, and I believed it's people who are stationed in Washington who are eligible for the National War College, I'd like to be considered for the Naval War College." And I got a snotty letter back from personnel saying, "You do not bid on war college assignments. You are selected for them." Basically, they said get off your high horse...

*Q: Awww [laughter]*

SELLIN: So, anyhow, they found my... they were looking, scrambling for somebody to go to the Naval War College, and they found my name. So what do you do? So I left Geneva, which I realize now was a grave error, because I got only two semesters of three.

*Q: But you went to the Naval War College, up in Newport.*

SELLIN: Newport, Rhode Island. The family came straight from Finland. I went through a routine that was not too dissimilar from any graduate school. Wrote reports once a week, did book reports, did all the kind of things that we've done in our own academic periods, and it was not very challenging, to be perfectly honest with you. I got perfect grades, but it was... the course was designed for another type of student. A very basic course. A snap, basically, for a Foreign Service officer. And the reason I was going there was that the State Department, I discovered later, had decided NOT to send anybody for that very reason. But the Navy got so wrapped around the axle, that they took it up to the Sec Def who went over to Sec State and they said, "Find a body." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] Don't ignore us.*

SELLIN: And I was the last one to attend. But anyhow, it served a useful purpose, I guess, but it didn't do any good to my career at all. My father was living alone up in New Hampshire in his little village, and it did make it possible for me to go up and see him every couple of weeks on weekends. He was getting quite old. So, after that, it was a goose egg in my career. So I came back again to the Department, walking the halls. Personnel had a whole year to find something for me to do and didn't do it. So I was finally... somebody asked me if I'd be willing to work in the Oceans and Environment and Science, the OES Bureau.

Do you have any more questions about the War College?

*Q: No.*

SELLIN: So, I was asked if I'd be interested in taking a job in OES, in the Science and Technology office... I'm not a scientist, but... There was one intriguing aspect. I was replacing a guy who was retiring who was also the Polar Affairs Officer. I agreed, and stepped into a job that turned out to be one of the most interesting jobs I've had.

*Q: That's where you got the Antarctic Treaty.*

SELLIN: Yes. So as time went on, I was involved in some of the bi-national science foundations we were establishing with Korea, and something with Israel, and did some other work on science and technology agreements, not knowing much about the subject, but it was interesting. But the point was we were getting involved more and more with maritime issues. The Antarctic Treaty was becoming very important for one particular reason. This was 1974. OPEC had been established, the oil embargo was in effect, and everyone was scrambling for oil. And somehow or other, there had been some research done to suggest that there was oil under the continental shelf of Antarctica. Now, the fact that this continental shelf is submerged to God knows how far down, 800 feet or something, because of the weight of the ice on the continent, it's very hard to get at that stuff. But at the same time, the Law of the Sea Treaty was being negotiated, and hydrocarbon resources were involved in the Law of the Sea, and Antarctica became a thorny part of the Law of the Sea negotiations. The upshot of this was that suddenly, instead of having the National Science Foundation and the State Department making up Antarctic policy and the delegations to the Antarctic Treaty consultative meetings, suddenly you had to have the EPA as observers, we had to have Commerce because of the oil, DOD because of logistics, and so on. So these delegations to the annual consultative meetings grew tremendously. The job took on a dimension that was not envisioned by me or anyone, and turned out to be a very important job and an stimulating one. I was there when we admitted the first new consultative party member, Poland. Up to that time, the consultative organization consisted of parties that had legitimate claims in Antarctica, or had participated in the geopolitical year in Antarctica in 1957, I think it was and the US and USSR. So, finally, Poland had met all the requirements for membership. They had established a permanent, year-round camp in Antarctica and they were carrying out scientific research.

*Q: The Poles were, that's interesting.*

SELLIN: So, they marched into the consultative meeting in London and said, "Here we are. We're consultative members. We've fulfilled..." And nobody knew what the hell to do, because it's the first new member since the Antarctic Treaty was signed by 12 countries in 1961. So we scrambled around and told them we'll have a special meeting and to come back again. So, amongst the 12 nations it was agreed that there would be a little formal entry ceremony and the next day they came in and we admitted them as consultative members.

*Q: A good Communist member, right?*

SELLIN: Right. And since then, I think there are 30 members now. It's grown hugely. But in the 70's there was confusion about Antarctica's future. And potential mineral resources exploitation, even marine living resources, were driving forces that could eroding the pristine environmental conditions of the continent, which State was trying to protect.

*Q: Are they still looking for oil down there?*

SELLIN: No, I don't think so.

*Q: I wondered about that.*

SELLIN: I haven't seen anything about it. I haven't followed it that closely in recent years. And it's there, but terribly expensive to extract.

*Q: Oh, sure. Who was the head of OES at that time?*

SELLIN: Well, we had several. It's kind of interesting. First of all, Herman Pollack was the...

*Q: Oh, Herman, yes, I knew him.*

SELLIN: He was the scientific adviser to the secretary.

*Q: He started the office, I think.*

SELLIN: Yes, he did. Then he, when it was, I'm trying to think, it became a bureau. I don't recall who the first A/S was, but when I got elevated, out of the OES science office, I was put up in an office next to the assistant secretary, to work with Robert Brewster who'd been brought in to be the senior DAS on special projects, which basically meant Antarctica. Then the A/S was Dixie Lee Ray, who was quite a character. She lasted about a year. I don't recall why she left.

*Q: She left with a blast at Henry.*

SELLIN: We were actually in a meeting in Oslo when she left. Our last phone call to Washington was to try to get authorization to do something or to agree with some position. We spoke to her and she said, "Well, I guess it's alright, I guess I still have the authority to do it." We said, "What do you mean, what do you mean?" And she said, "Well, this is my last day." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] I'm leaving.*

SELLIN: Yes. So then she was replaced by Patsy Mink.

*Q: Oh, yes, the former Congresswoman.*

SELLIN: Yes, she was out of Congress at the time. I think then she was re-elected. But she only lasted about a year, year and a half, or something like that. But it was a formative time for the Antarctic...

*Q: Did you travel at all on that job?*

SELLIN: I did. I traveled quite a bit to the consultative meetings. But unfortunately, I didn't get to some of the places I would have liked because the rotation of the hosts for the consultative meetings was set up in French alphabetical order. But in any case, after Oslo, which was the first one I attended, we were supposed to go to Moscow, and then to Johannesburg, and subsequently to somewhere else. So we met in Oslo, and since South Africa and the Soviets didn't recognize each other, they felt that they couldn't host the next meeting. So they skipped over them and we went to London. We had a consultative in London, and subsequent to that, we had a consultative meeting in Paris. I went only to places I had already been. I didn't see anything new, except Antarctica itself. I did have one trip shortly after I had gotten on the job, I spent a couple weeks in Antarctica, including a trip to the South Pole...

*Q: Did you get a trip down south?*

SELLIN: Yes, got to the Pole, and all over the general area where McMurdo is and where there is much of historical and geological interest to be seen.

*Q: What an interesting job that was!*

SELLIN: It was. It had all kinds of hidden aspects.

*Q: Now, were there difficulties with Congress in this regard that you had to play with?*

SELLIN: Well, Senator Pell was the only one that I ever had any interaction with. I actually went to testify; I had never done that before. He called a committee meeting to explore our position on the oil exploitation. The National Science Foundation and the



State Department weren't too keen on the oil drilling notion in Antarctica, but we had some pretty powerful enemies. So we did testify and it turned out to be a little meeting in Senator Pell's office with a stenographer. That was it. Three of us went up there from our office and he asked some questions. We had said, "This is off the record." And when it was all over, he says, "Well I think I'm going to print this, I'm going to publish this." We said, "Wait, wait, wait, come on. Well at least give us a chance to look it over to make sure we haven't said that would be damaging to..."

*Q: Get our necks chopped off.*

SELLIN: Yes. So he agreed to that. So we got the text and we deleted a few things, not a whole lot, and sent it back. Of course, we even put in some tie-in language so it would look as though it was the transcript, but he printed it with these damned deletions in it. Anyhow. It wasn't Congress so much an adversary, it was really the overall full-court press by various other government agencies who locked horns. Of course the EPA was in a sense on the State Department's side, and on the National Science Foundation's side. They didn't want anybody to interrupt the scientific work or mess up the penguin rookeries and things like that. And one of the things we had to do was create designated areas of special interest where nobody could go. These would be either nature preserves or places that had scientific potential for some kind of research. That was one of the principal jobs of the consultative meetings every year, to redraw the map of Antarctica a little bit.

I'm not sure if everyone knows this, but we do not have a claim to Antarctica. There is no U.S. claim.

*Q: To Antarctica?*

SELLIN: Yes, we have no claims in Antarctica.

*Q: Oh... Don't we have a slice of it?*

SELLIN: No, nope. We have nothing. There is a big area in east Antarctica that is unclaimed, and it was sort of- (end of tape)

It was thought that if the U.S. were to ever establish a claim, it would be in that area. But the Antarctic Treaty, in fact, puts all claims in abeyance. No one is enforcing an existing claim to territory in Antarctica as long as they are signatories to the Treaty, and would not exercise their sovereign rights to any of those areas unless the Treaty were abrogated. So that was the interesting part of the work, and the one that kept me fully occupied for several years. My big disappointment in this particular area was that the U.S. normally under the treaty conducted inspections of other posts, other nations' bases in Antarctica. And that was done on a fairly regular basis every couple of years, and as the Polar Affairs Officer, I expected and was planning for and was actually told I should lead an inspection expedition to Antarctica, circumnavigating the continent on an icebreaker, to visit the coastal bases, Russian, Argentine, Brits, New Zealanders, and even the Russian interior

Station, I think it was called Vostok, which was the most remote station in Antarctica. The South Pole is not remote; it's only five or six hundred miles from McMurdo. The most remote is quite a distance farther inland at the geographical center of the continent. And I was busy organizing that, getting ready. I had voted for Jimmy Carter in the election, and into the Department comes Jimmy Carter's transition team. My boss, Bob Brewster told me that I'd have to give up the inspection to prepare background papers on Antarctic issues. Very, very unhappily I agreed to find someone else to take the expedition. I did find a man named Alex Akalovsky, who was at loose ends, a Russian speaker, translator from defunct arms talks, with the language services. He had the pleasure of this great adventure that I had to give up. Jimmy Carter did me in a little later too. I also voted for him in the second election, but he closed my last post as an economy measure while I was there and I had to bow out.

*Q: Okay, any other comments about your days in OES or not?*

SELLIN: Not really. Antarctica really became the focus.

*Q: The focus there.*

SELLIN: And actually the focus changed in the last year I was there when we found that we could not create a minerals exploitation regime, which was slang for a way to mine oil, to drill for oil. That simply could not be agreed upon. The focus shifted to marine living sources, and the oceans and fisheries people in OES got heavily involved in that. The focus turned to that, and I found myself essentially sidelined. There was a big meeting in Hobart, Australia to begin the work on a fisheries regime. My boss said, "Ted, I'm taking somebody else from the fisheries side with me to that." And I realized then that my days in the Antarctic field were slowly but surely petering out. So at that time I began searching for another job.

*Q: Then in 1978, you received an assignment to Sweden. The last of the Scandinavian countries to which you had not been assigned until now, and you went to Gothenburg as consul general. Had you requested that, or how did that come about?*

SELLIN: No, I hadn't requested it specifically, but as I say I was looking around for something. A friend of mine was in that job and his tour was coming to an end, and I knew that. I let it be known to personnel that I wouldn't be averse to going there. It was with the knowledge that the post was on the list of possible closures. In fact, it had been closed by Nixon in part in protest against the Swedish attitude toward the Vietnam War. And, by dint of a lot of activity by Senator Hubert Humphrey and one of his staff aides, David Nelson, Humphrey got the post re-opened for the bicentennial year, 1976. The man who was to re-open it, John Owens, had come down from Stockholm. He did two years at the Embassy as political counselor and decided he wanted a post of his own, and so he was assigned to and re-opened the post in Gothenburg in '76. Then two years later he was transferred onward. I took the job knowing that it was iffy, but hoping against hope that it might stay open and this would be a marvelous way to close out a career, to finally get Sweden. But of course, it didn't work out quite that way.

*Q: Well, they followed through on your request for your first post. You got to Sweden, finally.*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: Now Gothenburg is a rather old post in the service, isn't it? It had been around a long time.*

SELLIN: Yes indeed. In fact, it vies with two or three other consulates or posts as the oldest in the history of the United States. Its establishment was one of the last acts of George Washington before he stepped down.

*Q: Is that right!*

SELLIN: He appointed a consul who was actually a Swede who was also a consul for the Russian czar, and I'm not sure if there wasn't another country in there. His name was Baumann. He was the first. Now, the post did continue to function with some interruptions until about 1985, having reopened briefly a few years after I closed it. The other posts in contention for the longevity title were Bremen and Tangier. They were all opened about the same time.

*Q: I remember that Gothenburg is an old post...*

SELLIN: Yes. It was Sweden's only ocean port in the early days, and later, when the Swedish-American line ran between New York and Sweden, that was their home-port. Of course, there was a real use for a consulate then.

*Q: Well, that's the big shipping port for automobiles and things out of Sweden, isn't it?*

SELLIN: Well, they're shipped from a little port a bit North. They're not right in Gothenburg proper, but they're in the general area. But shipping has declined tremendously in Gothenburg since the closure of the Swedish-American line.

*Q: How were your relations with the embassy in Stockholm?*

SELLIN: Well, they were very scant. I was quite disappointed in that regard, in part because of our personnel situation. The American staff consisted of me and the Consul. The consul left shortly after I got there. His replacement stayed for a year but because of the problem of the impending closure, the job was not a career-maker. He was a fine officer who had an opportunity to go somewhere else and I didn't want to stand in his way. In fact, I was the lone American there for the last six or eight months before shutting down all services.

*Q: So you had to do all the signing and everything else?*

SELLIN: Had to do everything. I had a couple of local employees and a USIS local, but

basically, it was very hard for me to get away and I didn't get up to Stockholm more than a couple of times. I must admit, that was one disappointment.

*Q: Did the ambassador come down and visit you?*

SELLIN: Oh, yes, Ambassador Rodney Kennedy-Minot came down a couple of times. The first time, I'd only been there a few weeks and Hasselblad of the famous Hasselblad camera died. He had been a good friend of the American embassy and consulate over the years. So I viewed the funeral as an event at which the brand-new consul general could meet everybody of importance in the town. But the ambassador decides to come down and I *go with him*, of course, but I'm the baggage carrier in a sense and somewhat overshadowed. He also came down one other time to give a lecture at the historical society on the American electoral process. About 20 people turned out. That was it.

*Q: How big was your consulate district?*

SELLIN: It was all of southern Sweden and part of western... up to the Norwegian border.

*Q: So you had a lot of territory to cover.*

SELLIN: It was quite large. Yes. And there again, because it was fairly difficult for me to get away, I traveled less than I should have. I did manage, however, to get around to virtually all of the larger cities during that period, but had no chance to make repeat visits.

*Q: Did you do speaking and things like that?*

SELLIN: I did. I talked to whomever about whatever would be of interest going on in the US, to Rotary clubs, schools. It depended on the nature of the local interests. I always visited the newspapers, had a talk with the editors, so we got some kind of local press play as a result of the visits and I got some provincial insights that I could report on.

*Q: Did you get back to your old university in Uppsala?*

SELLIN: I did, and that had changed a lot.

*Q: I visited that from Copenhagen.*

SELLIN: Well, they'd torn down the whole center of the town. The house in which I had roomed, right on the central square, was gone. As was the downtown area around it. But the University complex across the little river that bisected the town was essentially intact.

*Q: What would you say was the attitude toward the United States in your consular district in those years?*

SELLIN: Well, it was very positive. Gothenburg was renowned as, or they claimed it to be, totally Western oriented, unlike, the locals would say, the rest of Sweden. They talked about the "other Sweden." Stockholm was part of the other Sweden, over there to the Northeast. They were the real spirit of Sweden, they thought. They, in fact, were not as pronounced in the anti-Vietnam war rhetoric as the people were in Stockholm and the other parts of the country at the height of the Vietnam war. I would say they considered themselves very, very pro-American and pro-British. Of course, they had several large international industries situated there. The SKF ball bearing headquarters was in Gothenburg, the Volvo car was in Gothenburg, so they were quite dependent on good commercial ties with the U.S. and Western markets in general. The only demonstrations focused on the Consulate took place at the time of the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran. That occurred while I was there. There were a lot of Iranian student who were studying at the technical institute, Chalmers University. According to my contacts, there were about 600 of them at least, and maybe more, and they were divided between pro-Shah and anti-Shah groups. When the embassy takeover occurred in Teheran, next thing you know some of these students appeared in front of the American consulate, which was on the second floor of the building so we didn't feel particularly threatened. The police were very good. They kept these crowds, they weren't huge crowds, but they might be a couple hundred or three hundred, and they'd keep the two factions on opposite sides of the street so they wouldn't tangle. But they were both demonstrating, either for or against the U.S. Other than that all was quite.

*Q: Talking about foreign students and other foreigners, were there any foreign troubles in Gothenburg, any racist problems?*

SELLIN: Not really. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the Finnish contingent made up the largest single group of foreigners workers. There were also Greek and Turkish guest workers and then a smattering of African refugees. But it was really the Finns, the Greeks, and the Turks. And in fact, Swedish radio gave the news once a week, at least, in the three languages.

*Q: [laughter]*

SELLIN: But there wasn't any real trouble. In the years before I got there several terrorist murders of consular officers in Gothenburg took place. I think a Turk was killed, a Yugoslav was killed, and maybe an Israeli.

*Q: Were they killed by other groups...*

SELLIN: Yes.

*Q: ...or not by Swedes?*

SELLIN: No, no, no. These were Kurds killing the Turk, Ustashi killing the Yugoslav. As an aside, the old American embassy in Stockholm, was taken over by the Yugoslavs when we left it in the 1950s to build the new one. About the time they built the one in

Copenhagen that you and I both worked in. It was there, at Strandvägen 7, that I think the first ambassador was murdered in Sweden in living memory. The Ustashi murdered him in his office one day. That was quite a shock to the Swedes. That happened in what had been our American embassy.

*Q: Did you ever get any feedback from some of the American deserters who'd come to Sweden?*

SELLIN: I did to the extent that we had to visit prisoners, some of whom were draft evaders or deserters. Although the regulations required a certain number of consular visits per year, we weren't able to do it because I just wasn't able to get away.

*Q: You didn't have the personnel.*

SELLIN: Right. But one of the Military attachés up in Oslo had a man who came down to talk to the deserters who had committed crimes and were in prison, to offer them an amnesty when they finished their terms if they would return to the States. I spoke to a couple of the *deserters* when I did make my prison visits, but we weren't directly involved in trying to get them out or get them involved in the amnesty program. It was strictly the military who took care of that. I don't know how many of them accepted amnesty. I know that some did, but the others didn't want anything to do with us.

*Q: The reason I ask is because when we were in Copenhagen in the mid-'70s, quite a few of them came through on their way to Sweden. And of course our military attachés, nobody were trying to talk them out of it.*

SELLIN: Right.

*Q: Sometimes they weren't very...*

SELLIN: Were they active duty coming out of...

*Q: Yes, they were coming out of the Army in Germany, active duty. And there were some others who came over from the States to escape the draft and so forth.*

*Were there many problems in Gothenburg with strikes and lockouts and things like this?*

SELLIN: None that were noticeable.

*Q: No labor problems?*

SELLIN: No. Unions are strong in Sweden and the welfare state well entrenched even when the national administrations are other than Social Democratic. We had a Social Democratic mayor most of the time I was there. Gothenburg had been one of the very rambunctious towns during the '30s, with much labor unrest and left-wing agitation. But that subsided during the war and post-war period and was minimal when I was there. First of all, the local economy was fairly robust, despite the downsizing of the shipyards

that had been a mainstay of the economy for generations. In a last-gasp effort to maintain the yards, government subsidies kept them alive in the '60s and '70s, building a number of bulk carriers, the big super tankers, on speculation, when the Suez Canal closed. When they came on-line the canal had reopened and there was a glut of such tankers on the market. So the Swedish ones were all mothballed in the river marking the border between Norway and Sweden. In fact, the yards were trying to get rid of them at bargain prices. A couple were sold to Getty Oil while I was there. Getty would buy these big ones, they'd get a cut rate price on them and then the yard would take out a center section of about 100-200 feet and then just slap the ends together again. This would raise the draft so he used them to bring oil from as I recall Nigeria to the shallow oil depot in Chester, Pennsylvania on the Delaware River.

*Q: To get up there.*

SELLIN: So that was one of the ways the shipyards were trying to cope. And then they had a contract to build a very large floating dry dock for the Soviets. A Russian C.O.D. contract. They were working on that thing night and day while I was there. The last summer I was there, they were testing it in the waters off-shore. I was sailing up the coast. I had a sailboat there which I was only able to use rarely... and saw the tests that they were making on it, the final test a submersion test. Coming back the next evening, the dock was back in the yard, lights all over it, welding sparks flying, people were working like crazy because this thing apparently had sunk. They had turned off all the alarms while they were working on it... while they were giving it the test and it sank too far and crumpled the sides. So they had to fix it up in time to have it towed to Murmansk before fall weather would complicate that operation. They worked around the clock frantically to get it ready. They finally did so; late in the season the tug came and towed it up the long Norwegian coast and around North Cape, and just over the Russian border up in the Barents Sea the towline broke and the thing drifted ashore just beyond the Norwegian border with Russia. So they had to patch it up as best they could and towed it down to Trondheim, Norway for a more seaworthy patch. Then they towed it to Holland where somebody could really do the proper job. And it was delivered to Murmansk a year late, with all the penalties involved. And the yard had to carry all the extra costs. It was a debacle.

*Q: That wasn't the best deal in the world...*

SELLIN: No, but there was some interest in it. It was the only time I ever reached a global audience with a report. The naval attaché came down a few weeks later and told me that my report of the sinking incident had attracted military attention because of its timeliness. I'd gone into some detail because the dry-dock was designed to take in the largest Russian nuclear submarines, and had all kinds of special equipment to accommodate those. So the Navy apparently sent what would be an "all points bulletin" – which they call a "blue flash" – to every single Navy command and ship worldwide with my story of the sinking and delayed delivery of the dry-dock.

*Q: Written by Consul General Sellin...*

SELLIN: Yes.

*Q: Right.*

SELLIN: But that was it. Otherwise, basically, everything was quite calm.

*Q: When did you get the notice about the post closing?*

SELLIN: That was an on and off proposition. I'd get word from the desk, from the Bureau, that I was going to have to be prepared, but don't say anything yet. So I kept quiet. And then they'd call me back and say, "there's not going to be an announcement this week, wait 'til next week, so just... business as usual." And it kept on that way until about the eighteenth month.

*Q: The Swedes not knowing anything about it.*

SELLIN: Well, they sensed something...

*Q: I wondered if they sensed something...*

SELLIN: Sure, sure. On the other hand, we didn't close for over a year and a half. But finally the edict came down that I had to close by a certain date, the fifteenth of May, 1980, I had to go public.

*Q: What was the effect on the Swedes?*

SELLIN: Very unhappy. The Swedes of the region prided themselves that there was an American presence on the West Coast.

*Q: Sure.*

SELLIN: I mean the flag was flying there. They really wanted the American presence. It was a matter of prestige for them. Volvo was unhappy because the visa services would cease. We didn't have the waiver program then, although we could give Swedes multiple entries for the life of the passport, or whatever the period was. But still, it was an inconvenience for them not to have the consulate there. So they were very unhappy. One thing I did to extend services -when I closed the consulate I took the visa stamp and the crusher and a bunch of visa applications home with me because I stayed in my apartment until the fourth of July. So I continued, and if there were any emergencies I would issue the necessary visas. I just left the date stamp on May 15 and then just issued visas...  
[laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

SELLIN: I probably issued over a hundred visitors visas with that date until I had to actually move out and bring all that equipment up to Stockholm.



*Q: Did the embassy protest the closing at all?*

SELLIN: Not really. I think they felt that it was not a paying proposition. It wasn't living up to its economic cost, they thought. And of course, they did the immigration visas up in Stockholm anyhow. All I did was non-immigrant visas, American passport services and citizens services. And, of course, fly the flag.

*Q: Now this left no consular post in Scandinavia that I know of...*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: Only the four embassies.*

SELLIN: Yes. We did appoint a consular agent in Gothenburg who stayed on for a while, and then even that was terminated. He was the U.S. Bureau of Shipping representative there. Swedes were still building or servicing some ships that would call at U.S. ports.

*Q: Was there any pressure in Congress to keep it open?*

SELLIN: Not enough to do it. I think the people who had gotten it opened in '76 had pretty much shot their wad. Especially one Swedish lady named Maggie Carlson who could hardly speak English. But she was a champion of retention of the office. She would collect signatures on petitions, come over to the States and go up to the Congress and would talk to congressman who had Nordic connections and beat the table and try to charm them. It had worked once, when she was involved in the original re-opening in '76, but it didn't work this time.

*Q: Did we have property that you had to dispose of there?*

SELLIN: No. The residence had been sold years before, when we closed in the 60's. Everything was rented.

*Q: And what about the local employees? Did you have any that we had to take care of?*

SELLIN: Not really. They took their severance pay. The Swedish welfare system was quite generous. When I announced to the staff that we would be closing on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, and this would have been about the first of April, six weeks, I said that I really hoped that they would understand that it would be very difficult for me to do by myself and that I hoped that they could stay on until the actual day of closure. Most agreed and did. Two guys, the local employees that were involved in processing visa applications were not enthusiastic. They promised that they would do so but I realized that it didn't look very likely from their attitude. And sure enough, about a week later, they came in and presented their two-weeks notice. So I had to let them go. A month later, doing the last check of the office before evacuating, we discovered that a some 25 mint U.S. passports were missing, presumably taken by the aforementioned employees. An

investigation by the local police was unproductive and no charges were brought. But two years later, when the consulate had reopened, the passports were found in an abandoned car outside of the city. One was missing and one had shown evidence of unsuccessful tampering, leading to the conclusion that the missing one had been defaced beyond use in efforts to alter it. Happy ending. I should add that all of the rest of the staff, my secretary, the commercial and USIS staff stayed on and helped until the end, which was much appreciated.

*Q: And we didn't keep a cultural presence there at USIA or anything else?*

SELLIN: No. Nothing.

*Q: Well, that was a rather sad ending to close a post.*

SELLIN: Yes it was. I'd hoped I'd be able to stay there for a little while, somewhat longer at least. But there it was, and I came back to Washington and decided I would step down.

*Q: Do you have any final thoughts on the Foreign Service as a career after those years?*

SELLIN: Yes. I enjoyed my career thoroughly. Who wouldn't in those posts? And I found that with the exception of some pedestrian jobs in Washington the last one in the Department was very interesting and challenging and one I enjoyed a lot. But in general, I certainly have no complaints about how my own career evolved. There is no question that the Service has changed, even markedly, in the half century since I joined. In my A-100 course at FSI we had two women out of some 30 fledgling officers, and even that number was rare. Now sometimes 50% of the A-110s are women. Changes in personnel tactics and strategies have at times worked to an officer's advantage and sometimes not. Tandem assignments, unheard of in the first half of my career, and the lifting of some onerous, and uncompensated, representational duties for non-working spouses overseas seems to have made life easier for Foreign Service officers; something that is unhappily counterbalanced by the real dangers now encountered when serving abroad. I don't think I would enjoy the Foreign Service as much now as I did earlier, although the lure of adventure is always there.

*Q: Yes, and also the question of dedication. The modern officer sometimes doesn't look on it as a lifetime career as we did in our time coming. They try it for a few years and that's it.*

SELLIN: Well, I think the Foreign Service itself is to blame to some extent, accepting as it has a quasi-military promotion system. The Service is now so large and diversified, and in some respects therefore more impersonal than even 25 years ago. This makes the fulfillment of career aspirations quite difficult and may induce our best and brightest to look outside the Service at some point in their careers. In some respects, however, I think the tenuring system is not too bad, since it ensures a good officer a twenty year window in which he or she can stay or leave.

*Q: Well, thank you very much, Ted. This is Tom Dunnigan signing off on March 3, 2003. I've been interviewing Ted Sellin today, a Foreign Service officer retired, who spent almost 30 years in the Foreign Service, a good deal of it in the Scandinavian countries. Thank you, Ted.*

SELLIN: My pleasure.

*End of interview*