

The Archives of President Urho Kekkonen

The President of the Republic of Finland, Dr Urho Kekkonen (1900-1986) established in 1970 a private foundation to maintain the archives of his own personal documents. The idea was initiated while he had made an official visit in the U.S.A and got acquainted with the archives of president Roosevelt in Washington D.C. At that time President Kekkonen thought he would retire in the beginning of the year 1974 when his third period as the president of Finland would end. After that he could fulfil his dreams of writing his memoirs. Moreover he planned that after having finished the work he could let the researchers use his archives. In the letter with which the archives were founded president Kekkonen said that the main aim for his archives is to promote the study of political history during his presidency.

Urho Kekkonen had very carefully collected and saved his personal papers from his early years. Before he started his long career in politics in the 1930`s he had already been an important figure in student and sports politics, a successful athlete and a very eager writer. Kekkonen was unique among the presidents of the republic, statesmen and politicians of Finland - he ruled over 25 years (1956-1981) and he had much more power and authority than his predecessors or successors. Kekkonen was not only the leader and maker of the foreign policy but also the real leader of our nation. Kekkonen could convince the leaders of the Soviet Union of the multilateral benefits the free trade agreements between Finland and the EFTA and EEC would bring. He also pointed out that the agreements would create stability in Northern Europe. He was the only person who could handle our difficult situation between a great communist power and the western world. Every Finn had an opinion about him, some worshipped, some hated him. The after war history of Finland can not be understood without getting familiar with the archives of Kekkonen.

The Archives of Urho Kekkonen is situated in the country town of Orimattila, 110 km north of Helsinki, where the foundation bought an estate which was restored for archival use in 1971 and again in the year 2000. It is the only archives in Finland where the researchers can overnight and moreover to work all night long if they wish. The Archives of President Urho Kekkonen is one of the ten private archives in Finland, which collect private records and archives of different associations in their own branch and give the material for scientific study.

There are 350 metres of shelf space of documents in the Kekkonen archives, mainly written in the Finnish but however, there has been researchers from Norway, Germany, Sweden, Russia and Estonia. The archives collect new information and receive new material from politicians of the time and there are now 30 private collections.

The archives of Urho Kekkonen cooperates e.g. with archives and museums, government authorities and universities. Our main partners are the members of the Private Archives Association, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the National Board of Antiquities - with which we have made an exhibition to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the CSCE treaty. The exhibition is open this summer in the museum of Urho Kekkonen in Helsinki and it will later be circulated in several embassies of Finland. In the beginning of this year the archives opened web pages with the National Library of Finland to present a large selection of digitalised documents about Kekkonen between the years of 1900 and 1956.

Our goal is to give information about Urho Kekkonen's life and work and preserve his personal private documents. These documents facilitate an easier understanding of Finland and its foreign policy in the years of the cold war.

We are open Wednesdays from 10 a.m to 4 p.m, other days according to agreement.

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