

## Thomas Stone's despatch to Ottawa 6.10.1949

FINLAND  
No. 3

CONFIDENTIAL  
Stockholm, 6th October, 1949

The Honourable  
The Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
OTTAWA, Canada.

Sir, I have the honour to send you the following further report on my first visit to Finland.

2. This is a brave, hospitable and altogether admirable people. The atmosphere of work and resolution, which one cannot help but feel, is impressive and encouraging. There is a grim determination to solve economic and political problems to the point of making greater material sacrifices and working hard than perhaps any other people. For the bed they are now lying upon is not remarkable for the number of roses in it. There seems to be, however, plenty of good food. The same is not true of housing which is severely restricted. Persons with extra rooms are compelled to take in lodgers – by no other means could a roof have been put over the heads of 400,000 displaced Karelians. Finns are not of course immune from all human weaknesses and cases have come to light (like some old voters lists) of “lodgers” who have been dead these many years, or are living in Canada. On the whole, however, this enforced billeting is accepted as part of the tough game which now has to be played, and there are surprisingly few efforts at evasion.

3. There are other cruel and visual reminders of defeats in two wars constantly before them. Passenger and freight vessels, once the pride of the Finnish Merchant Marine now sail in and out of their ports bearing Russian names and flying hammer and sickle. The boundary of Porkkala is dramatically close to, and on the west side of, Helsinki. We were taken to see it. On the Russian side it is dead country. The houses are empty and it was reported to us (we were not close enough to verify it – one step to get into Porkkala and three weeks to get out, the Finns say, so we took no chances) that there is a machine gun in every window. Certainly very much in evidence are the watch towers all along the border which might be for forest fire protection but are not. The Finnish farmers along the border, this being their first experience with a Russian frontier, are quite mystified by people who cannot speak to them across a wire fence. Their mystification is deepened by the fact that in some cases they are allowed to crop land within the Porkkala area (only where the fence has cut a field in two) but not allowed to speak to the soldiers they see there even without the fence between them. Once or twice the Russians have threatened to remove this privilege because some farmers offered some soldiers cigarettes. Nothing is known of what goes on in the interior of the area. Trains are blacked out, hermetically sealed and under guard when they cross the area running between Helsinki and Åbo drawn by Russian locomotives. Ships play safe and never go closer than 5 ½ to 6 miles from shore.

4. Nor is anything known in detail of what goes on in Karelia. Air photographs indicate that the forest is taking over the fields and that there is little or no cultivation. Viipuri, once a thriving city of