Maintaining Neutrality between the Two German States: Finland and Divided Germany until 1973

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Abstract

After the end of the Second World War, when Finland sought to redefine its position vis-à-vis Germany, negotiations were dogged by the fact that Finland had been a close ally of Hitler's Germany in 1941–4 in the war against the USSR. In April 1948 Finland signed a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) with the USSR, in which the military articles were based on the need to counter a potential German attack on the Soviets via Finland's territory. Finland's international position was so difficult that it became the only country in the world that did not establish full diplomatic relations with either of the German states. It was also the only country in the world to pursue a policy of absolute neutrality vis-à-vis both Germanys. When the Finnish government offered to host the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in May 1969, its main preoccupation was the German question, and it succeeded in fending off Soviet pressure to recognise the GDR. In 1973, with West German Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt's Neue Ostpolitik *easing tensions with regard to the German question, Finland was able to establish full diplomatic relations with both German states simultaneously.*

During the Cold War no other international controversy left Finland so uncomfortably spread-eagled between East and West as did the issue of divided Germany. For Finland, itself trying to keep a foot in both camps, the division of Germany into two states in 1949 was the worst of all possible outcomes. Until 1973 Finland was unable to establish full diplomatic relations with either of the two German states: it was the only country in the world which was obliged to remain strictly neutral towards both of them. In this respect Finland's position was different from that of the

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other Nordic countries, which at the very beginning, in 1949, established diplomatic relations only with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG – West Germany).

Maintaining good relations simultaneously and even-handedly with both the FRG and the German Democratic Republic (GDR – East Germany) became one of the hardest tests of Finland's policy of neutrality during the Cold War.[1] Until 1967, when the Federal Republic recognised Romania, there was only one country in the world besides Finland that had relations of the same standing with both German states, and that was the USSR itself, which had full diplomatic relations from 1955. (Finland had had an equal consular relation with both Germanys since 1953.)

Finland between the hammer and the anvil

The key to understanding Finland's German policy throughout the Cold War is the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) signed by Finland and the USSR on 6 April 1948, which defined the limits and freedoms of Finland's international position. The FCMA treaty did not force Finland into a military alliance with the USSR. On the contrary, according to the preamble of the treaty, Finland was entitled to hold aloof from any disputes between the superpowers. The military articles obliged Finland to defend its own territory with all its strength 'if Germany or some other country allied to it were to attempt to invade the USSR through Finland's territory'. Under Article 2 of the treaty Finland undertook to request Soviet assistance if it could not resist the invader on its own. This was, of course, the most dangerous part of the treaty from the Finnish point of view.

The reason for mentioning Germany specifically in the treaty was that Finland had maintained close relations with Hitler's Third Reich and had fought alongside it as 'a brother in arms' against the USSR in 1941–4. That dark legacy, as enshrined in the FMCA, was to bedevil Finland's relationship with Germany for decades after 1945.

The fact that Germany alone was named as a potential common enemy of Finland and the USSR is enough to explain why Finland found itself up against a brick wall with regard to the German question. The military articles of the FCMA meant that Finland's German policy was by definition subordinate to and dependent on its relations with the USSR. On the other hand, the USSR's foreign policy vis-à-vis Finland looked far beyond Finnish borders towards Germany, and indeed the whole of northern Europe.

In the first phase of the Cold War the USSR left Finland very little room for manoeuvre. From as early as summer 1947, when the USSR prevented Finland from participating in the Marshall Plan (the European Recovery Programme, ERP), the former watched jealously every Western contact of the Finns. They were not allowed

1 On Finland's relations with divided Germany see Dörte Putensen, *Im Konfliktfeld zwischen Ost und West. Finnland, der Kalte Krieg und die deutsche Frage 1947–1973* (Berlin: Arno Spitz, 2000), and Seppo Hentilä, *Kaksi Saksaa ja Suomi. Saksan-kysymys Suomen puolueettomuuspolitiikan haasteena* (English summary: The Two Germanys and Finland. The German Question as a Challenge to Finland's Policy of Neutrality) (Helsinki: SKS, 2003).

to join such European organisations as the European Council, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) or even the Nordic Council, founded in 1952 as an interparliamentary organisation of the Scandinavian countries. Obviously Denmark and Norway's membership of NATO was most unwelcome to the USSR and fitted ill with its interpretation of the so-called 'Northern Balance', a geopolitical constellation including the NATO members Denmark and Norway in the West, with neutral Sweden in the middle, and in the East Finland, whose neutrality was subject to the military articles of the FCMA treaty.[2]

In 1955, when the 'spirit of Geneva' seemed to offer a new opportunity for the political tensions between the great powers to be relaxed, no similar relaxation was perceptible with regard to the German question. On the contrary, both German states were integrated even more tightly with their respective blocs. By the Paris treaties of May 1955, the Western powers acknowledged the sovereign status of the Federal Republic of Germany and definitively confirmed its membership of NATO. Only a few days later the USSR and its satellites founded a military alliance of their own. Thus the establishment of the Warsaw Pact was, or at least was meant to be, a reaction to the rearming of West Germany.

The Federal Republic's membership of NATO provoked a major change in the USSR's German policy. By now it was apparent that Stalin's aim of creating a united, demilitarised and neutral Germany, jointly controlled by the four victorious allied powers until the holding of a final peace conference, was totally unrealistic. In response to the new situation, the USSR declared that the state of war with Germany had ended and proposed establishing full diplomatic relations with the two existing states. This led to Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's famous visit to Moscow, and on 14 September a treaty was signed commencing diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR.

September 1955 was a busy season in the Kremlin. Adenauer had barely left Moscow when two other foreign delegations, from Finland and from the GDR, arrived to discuss important matters. In the negotiations with Finland's elderly President, J. K. Paasikivi, and his vigorous Prime Minister, Urho Kekkonen, the Soviet leaders surprisingly handed back the naval base on the Porkkala peninsula which they had leased in September 1944 for fifty years. Getting rid of the Red Army troops, which had been garrisoned within cannon-shot of Helsinki, was a major relief to the Finns. In return Finland had to agree to extend the FCMA treaty for a further twenty years. In the context of September 1955 even this action has to be understood as a Soviet response to the FRG's entry into NATO. Thus the military threat from West Germany (and its allies) was confirmed as a key issue in Finnish–Soviet relations.

The Soviet Foreign Minister, V. M. Molotov, assured the Finnish delegation that the USSR would press for Finland to be made a member of the United Nations. It did not take him long to fulfil this promise, as he went straight from negotiating

2 Seppo Hentilä, 'USSR, Finland and the *Northern Balance*, 1957–1963', in Wilfried Loth, ed., *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence, 1953–1965* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 239–57.

with the Finns to attend a meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York. These successes balanced any Finnish disappointment on finding that their hosts in the Kremlin were unwilling to engage in any discussion of border issues, meaning the areas of Karelia that Finland had ceded in course of the Second World War.

Simultaneously with Paasikivi and Kekkonen the leader of the ruling East German Socialist Unity Party (SED), Walter Ulbricht, and his Prime Minister, Otto Grotewohl, were in Moscow in September 1955 to negotiate a state treaty granting sovereign status to the GDR. The arrangement was of little importance per se but can be considered as a counterbalance to the newly established diplomatic relations between the USSR and the FRG, confirming the USSR's 'two states' approach to the German question.

To round off these successful negotiations, on 19 September the Finnish and East German delegations were invited to a banquet in the Kremlin. At some time during the dinner the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev, abruptly asked Kekkonen why Finland would not follow suit and recognise the GDR, now that it had gained the status of a sovereign state. Later the same evening, without informing Paasikivi or asking his permission, Kekkonen had a private talk with Khrushchev and agreed to recognise the GDR if in return the USSR ceased to oppose Finland's membership of the Nordic Council. Kekkonen assured the East German leaders that within two weeks Finland would cut the Gordian knot by recognising both German states simultaneously. Kekkonen could see nothing wrong with a package that would at the same time strengthen Finland's position as a Nordic country and establish a favourable relationship with both German states, as the USSR had just done.[3]

The first victim of the Hallstein Doctrine?

Khrushchev kept his side of the deal, and Finland was able to join the Nordic Council in October 1955 without Soviet opposition; in December the country was finally accepted as a member of the United Nations. But Kekkonen was unable to keep his promise to Khrushchev owing to the extremely adverse reaction from the FRG. A few days after the Finnish delegation returned from Moscow one of its members – his identity has never been established–confidentially told the head of the West German trade mission in Helsinki, R. F. Koenning, that the Finnish government was preparing for diplomatic recognition of both German states. This 'deep throat' also knew Koenning that in the negotiations it was the USSR that had raised the issue of recognising the GDR, but that the Finns had been given a free hand to deal with the question. This information worried Koenning and he asked the Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt) in Bonn to brief him on what arguments he should use if the Finnish government actually tried to implement such a plan.

3 Kimmo Rentola, *Niin kylmää että polttaa. Kommunistit, Kekkonen ja Kreml 1947–1958* (Helsinki: Otava, 1997), 380.

Bonn was very quick to react. The federal government would accept only the existing state of affairs. If a Finnish ambassador was accredited to Pankow[4] it would mean that Finland also recognised the division of Germany, and this would impede reunification. It would constitute a worrying precedent. The establishment of diplomatic relations with the GDR would challenge the FRG's claim to be the Germans' sole authentic representative, and so the federal government would regard it as an unfriendly action. Accordingly, Koenning was instructed to tell the Finns that if they became the first country in the free world to recognise the Pankow government, this would be interpreted as a serious sign of Finland's increasing dependence on the USSR.[5]

The FRG tried to encourage Finland to continue its policy of not recognising either German state. General Consul Koenning provided the Finnish Foreign Ministry Koenning with a copy of a statement made by Chancellor Adenauer in the Bundestag on 22 September: 'We are determined to maintain our original position vis-à-vis third states with regard to the so-called GDR. I must make it absolutely clear that in future the federal government will continue to regard any establishment of diplomatic relations between third states and the "GDR" as an unfriendly act with regard to us and as an incitement to deepen the division of Germany.' Koenning emphasised that this statement was aimed at Finland among others.[6]

These September signals were almost exactly the same as the pronouncement by Bonn two and a half months later. On 8 December 1955 the West German government announced that recognition of the GDR by any country would be considered as an unfriendly act towards the FRG and would be answered by the breaking-off of diplomatic relations with the country in question. This became known as the Hallstein Doctrine after its inventor Walter Hallstein, the state secretary of the Auswärtiges Amt. The FRG continued to apply it to the end of the 1960s to all countries except the USSR, which remained the only country in the world to have full diplomatic relations with both German states.

In 1955 Finland was the first victim of the Hallstein Doctrine. This was, of course, because at that time no other non-communist country in the world – or at least in Europe – had even contemplated recognising the GDR. Bonn would certainly have applied the Hallstein Doctrine if a country like Finland, which had previously had no diplomatic relations with either German state, had simultaneously recognised both. The FRG would categorically have rejected any such recognition, and it is quite certain that its reply would have been couched in terms that were anything but diplomatically polite. Finland had no interest in stirring up a hornet's nest by recognising both German states. The worst possibility would have been a break in

4 Pankow was the part of Berlin in which the East German leaders lived until the 1960s. The name was used in West Germany to refer to the East German communist government.

5 Telegram from the Auswärtiges Amt to Koenning, 26 Sept. 1955, B 23, Bd. 13, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PAAA).

6 Memorandum by R. R. Seppälä, 27 Sept. 1955, 12 L Länsi-Saksa, Ulkoasiainministeriön arkisto (UM, Archives of the Finnish Foreign Ministry), Helsinki. All translations of quotations are by the author.

relations which might have paralysed or at least badly disrupted trade with West Germany, which was an important factor in Finland's economy.

The Hallstein Doctrine was not, of course, invented specifically for Finland. The basic idea had been an axiom of West German foreign policy from the very beginning, even before it was officially formulated and announced. On the other hand we can safely assume that Finland would have carried out Kekkonen's promise and recognised both German states if Bonn had not reacted so rapidly and determinedly. To call Finland the first victim of the Hallstein Doctrine is justified in view of the situation in 1955. In Europe at least, Finland was the only non-communist country which could even think of recognising the GDR. The consistency of Bonn's foreign policy was tested two years later, in 1957, when Yugoslavia recognised the GDR as part of Tito's attempt to mend fences with Khrushchev. West Germany immediately severed diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia.

German dimensions of the Finnish-Soviet crisis of 1958–61

The military articles of the FCMA treaty, intended to counter the alleged threat of a German invasion of the USSR's Finnish territory, put Finland at the heart of Cold War conflicts. Every significant development in Germany affected Finnish–Soviet relations because of the military articles of the FCMA treaty.

In autumn 1958, during the 'second Berlin crisis', relations between Finland and the USSR reached a crisis point, known as the 'night frosts'. The reason for this tension was the exclusion of the Communist Party from government, although the recent election had made it the largest group in the Finnish parliament. The right, the Centre Party and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) formed a coalition government headed by Karl-August Fagerholm of the SDP. The USSR's reaction was unexpectedly harsh. It broke off trade negotiations and recalled its ambassador from Helsinki. In international diplomacy, such an action is generally the prelude to the severing of diplomatic relations.

In summer 1961 the international situation was again extremely tense because of the Berlin crisis; in Finland both presidential and parliamentary elections were approaching. It was not certain that President Kekkonen, by now a controversial figure, would be re-elected, because he was facing a strong challenge from a candidate backed by both the right and the SDP. A new crisis emerged in relations between Finland and the USSR. On 30 October 1961 the USSR sent the Finnish government a note which invoked the 'imperialist threat' from West Germany and proposed defence consultations in accordance with the military articles of the mutual assistance treaty. Kekkonen was away on a visit to the United States; in fact, when the note arrived he was sitting in Hawaii with a garland round his neck.

On the same day as the USSR sent its note to Finland, it also set off a 50-megaton nuclear bomb at its testing ground in Novaya Zemlya. This was the biggest bang by far in nuclear history to date.[7] The timing may have been a coincidence

7 Pekka Visuri, *Puolustusvoimat kylmässä sodassa. Suomen puolustuspolitiikka 1945–1961* (Porvoo: WSOY 1994), 187–8.

rather than a warning to Finland of coming doom, but in any event the effect was horrifying. The USSR had addressed the note to the Finnish government, but the real target was first and foremost the FRG and then Denmark and Norway, and a severe warning to Sweden into the bargain. The Soviet rhetoric was extremely harsh: West Germany was accused of plotting revenge, and the note even alleged that the Bundeswehr had been created to carry on where Hitler's Wehrmacht had left off.[8] The Bonn government dismissed these accusations as totally absurd, regarding them rather as an indication of the USSR's own imperialistic plans in the north of Europe.[9]

An analysis of the note, which was fifteen pages long, reveals that a good 47 per cent of the text related to West German militarism, 24 per cent to West German influence on Denmark and Norway, 15 per cent to military co-operation between West Germany and Denmark, 4 per cent to Sweden and only the remaining 10 per cent to Finland itself. The last sentence was the most ominous: on the basis of the military articles of the FCMA treaty, the USSR proposed consultations on possible Soviet military aid to help Finland repel the increasing threat in the north of Europe.

Kekkonen did not interrupt his trip but sent his Foreign Minister, Ahti Karjalainen, to Moscow to find out what the USSR was trying to achieve with the note. Karjalainen failed to ease the situation, and Kekkonen had to go in person to speak to the Soviet leaders. The sense of drama was heightened by the fact that the meeting was arranged to take place in Novosibirsk in Siberia, far away to the east. At this point Kekkonen's opponent in the presidential election indicated his intention to withdraw his candidacy in the national interest. The meeting in Novosibirsk resolved the situation with surprising ease. Khrushchev promised to postpone the consultations, but required Finland to keep a closer watch on developments in the Baltic and in northern Europe. There was a feeling of relief in Finland once the crisis had passed. Kekkonen appeared as the saviour of the nation, even in the eyes of many of his opponents.

Looking at the crisis from the Soviet viewpoint, it was entirely logical to invoke the FCMA treaty, since it was the basis of the entire Soviet defence against an attack from the north-west. The aim of the famous note was not to intimidate Finland but to make the situation as clear as possible to all involved. The fact remains that the Kremlin enormously exaggerated the German threat, and that one by-product of the note was flagrant interference in the Finnish presidential election.

Kekkonen himself benefited enormously from the note crisis. It made him the unchallenged leader in both foreign and internal policy, a situation which certain contemporaries stigmatised as 'Kekkoslovakia'. He never again had to face a serious

8 The text of the Soviet Note to the Finnish government of 30 Oct. 1961 can be consulted in e.g. Hans-Peter Krosby, *Kekkosen linja* (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä 1974), 399–406 (appendix).

9 Ulkomaisten hallitusten virallisia kommunikeoita Neuvostoliiton nootin johdosta I (Official communiqués of foreign governments concerning the Soviet note), Bonn, 31 Oct. 1961, Urho Kekkosen vuosikirja 1961 (Kekkonen's Yearbook 1961), Tasavallan presidentin arkistosäätiö, Urho Kekkosen Arkisto (UKA, Archives of the President of the Republic), Orimattila.

challenge; he gradually crushed his political opponents and during the 1960s and 1970s constructed a presidential system in Finland. Like de Gaulle's France, Finland saw the emergence of an unofficial 'presidential' party, which spread out to left and right from the Agrarian Party in the centre until it covered the entire political spectrum.

It is obvious that the 'night frosts' and the note crisis were symptoms of increasing tension over the German question and were not unconnected with the Berlin crises; but they did not directly influence Finland's policy towards the two German states. It is interesting to note that with regard to the recognition of the GDR, the USSR and the FRG both behaved in a restrained fashion towards Finland (although with radically different motives) in order to avoid making the Finns' position unnecessarily difficult.

Both these crises had a bearing on Finland's position quite apart from its foreign policy. Kimmo Rentola, researching the background to the night frosts, noted that the USSR stood to gain economically from a strengthening and liberalisation of Finland's commercial ties with the West in the late 1950s, when the proportion of Finland's trade with the East was beginning to fall. Ideology was another potent factor: the USSR was anxious to get the Communists back into the Finnish government in the hope that the country would become a shining example of transition to socialism via peaceful coexistence and the inclusion of the working-class movement in a coalition.[10]

Indirectly, the crises had the effect of making any future change to the non-recognition policy even more problematic. Hence the maintenance of impartial relations with both German states became a litmus test for the credibility of Finland's policy of neutrality during the 1960s. Throughout that decade, both Germanys repeatedly accused the Finns of faltering in their impartiality and favouring the other side.

The archives of the former GDR foreign ministry contain a detailed explanation of the aims of the Soviet note to Finland, given to the East German government by the head of the Scandinavian department of the Foreign Ministry, N. M. Lunkov. First and foremost, the Soviets had intended to make their views plain to the Finns, particularly the reactionaries led by the right-wing social democrat leader Väinö Tanner. Second, they had sought to influence attitudes in Denmark and Norway 'so that these countries would not be impaled on the hook of West German imperialism'.[11]

'The GDR must be recognised immediately!'

In the mid-1960s the GDR started an intensive political campaign in Finland to obtain diplomatic recognition. To the East Germans Finland was a special case, *Sonderfall Finnland*, being a close friend of the USSR and in its political sphere of influence. This made it obviously the 'most progressive country of the capitalist world and the

10 Rentola, *Niin kylmää että polttaa*, 488.

11 Vermerk vom Gespräch mit dem Genossen Lunkow, Moscow, 11 Dec. 1961, A 14053, Bestand MfAA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GDR), PAAA, Berlin.

weakest link in its chain'. This was the place to start the campaign for recognition of the GDR, which would then spread to the other Scandinavian countries and further west. If Finland would not perform this recognition of its own accord, the GDR confidently expected the Soviets to put the necessary political pressure on the Finnish government.

And did they? It is an interesting question. From time to time the Soviet leaders did suggest to Kekkonen that Finland ought to recognise the GDR; it would help to relieve tensions in Europe. In 1968, just after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the Kremlin did try to exert direct pressure on the Finns in this matter, but on the whole its tone was more persuasive than demanding. The East Germans were disappointed with Big Brother; they felt entitled to much stronger support. Once or twice the Finnish president made surprisingly bold propositions to the Soviets concerning the recognition of the GDR. For instance, in summer 1968 he suggested that it could be done as part of a reciprocal agreement whereby the USSR would return the city of Viipuri (Vyborg) to Finland.[12]

It is not in the least surprising that the GDR's drive for recognition in the late 1960s and early 1970s should have focused on Finland, where the anti-recognition façade seemed most likely to crack.

In Finland itself there were different shades of political opinion on the question of how the country should react if the FRG rejected an offer of diplomatic recognition. Many believed that the stalemate in Finnish–German relations was due to West Germany's stubborn adherence to the utopian ideal of German reunification.

Since the 1960s a major plank of East Germany's policy vis-à-vis the capitalist world had been to encourage recognition movements. In Finland the development had been so favourable that only one real obstacle remained: the government's official German policy. All the resources of the GDR's trade mission, its cultural centre in Helsinki and the East German–Finnish Friendship Society proved insufficient to break down this barrier. The GDR's trump card was Finnish public opinion, which was persuaded that the German split was permanent. This enabled the pro-recognitionists to recruit influential Finnish politicians and other public figures across the political spectrum.

It was the task of the East German–Finnish Friendship Society to organise the recognition movement. For this purpose it received substantial sums of money from East Germany. At the society's annual meeting in March 1967 the newly elected officers were instructed to consider how it could promote the recognition of both German states.[13]

Via a letter to his Finnish colleague, Mauno Koivisto of the SDP, the Prime Minister of the GDR, Willi Stoph, invited the Finnish government to send an

12 Kekkonen's secret memorandum 'DDR > Viipuri', talks in Moscow on 13 and 24 June 1968, Kekkonen's Yearbook 1968 MK (micro card) no. 112–13, UKA.

13 Minutes of the annual meeting of the Finnish–East German Friendship Society on 29 March 1967, Suomi–DDR–seura (Finnish–East German Friendship Society), Kansallisarkisto (KA, National Archives), Helsinki.

official delegation to the celebrations of the GDR's twentieth anniversary in Berlin. Koivisto never even replied to the invitation.[14] The GDR general consul in Helsinki, Heinz Oelzner, then tried to put some pressure on Kalevi Sorsa, who had recently been elected as party secretary to the SDP. Sorsa said that he had never heard of any plans to send an official delegation to East Berlin. When Oelzner asked if it would be possible to establish official contacts between the East German SED and the Finnish SDP, Sorsa broke off the discussion, saying that the SDP already had relations with the CPSU, and that was enough. Oelzner gathered that Sorsa was reluctant to continue talks with the East German representatives.[15]

Let us pause here for a moment. When Sorsa told Oelzner that the CPSU contacts were enough for the SDP, he made it clear that contacts with the SED did not have even the instrumental value which the chairman of the SDP contingent in the Finnish parliament, L. A. Puntila, had referred to in 1968 when he said that 'the way to Moscow was via East Berlin'.[16] At that time Puntila was head of a working group planning the SDP's new German policy.

Some Finnish politicians whose relationship with Moscow was for various reasons problematic were very interested in contacts with East Germany. Among them were the long-serving president of the parliament, K.-A. Fagerholm, the chairman of the Centre Party, Johannes Virolainen, the chairman of the SDP (before he became Prime Minister in May 1966), Rafael Paasio, and of course Puntila. The enthusiasm for GDR contacts among certain leading members of the Conservative Party, especially Juuso Häikiö, may be susceptible to a similar interpretation. By contrast, the Foreign Minister, Ahti Karjalainen of the Centre Party, and his successor in 1970–1, Väinö Leskinen of the SDP, did not need to go via East Berlin when they wanted to establish reliable contacts with Moscow. Mauno Koivisto disliked East Germans so much that he would have nothing to do with them. In 1969 Kalevi Sorsa came to a negotiating table which had been set up in May the previous year with the purpose of establishing relations between the SDP and the CPSU.

The Finnish Committee for the Recognition of the GDR was founded on 13 January 1970 under the auspices of the East German–Finnish Friendship Society, with the slogan 'The GDR must be recognised immediately!' Forty representatives from different societies were present. The committee itself was very much dominated by the political left: communists and People's Democrats representing trade union and labour sports movements and various student organisations. Most of the committee members had long been active in the Friendship Society, but not all. For instance, the election of Tarja Halonen of the SDP, who worked in the 1970s as a lawyer in Finland's Central Organisation of Trade Unions (SAK), was totally

14 DC-20 Nr.4531, Nachlass Willy Stoph. Länderakten Finnland, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO BA).

15 Vermerk vom Gespräch zwischen dem Parteisekretär der SDPFi Kalevi Sorsa und dem Leiter der Handelsvertretung, Genossen Oelzner, 19 Nov. 1969, ZK der SED, Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, DY 30 IV A 2/20-561, SAPMO BA.

16 Notes of talks with Herzfeldt, deputy Foreign Minister of the GDR, on 7 Oct. 1968. Lauri Puntilan kokoelma, F 232. Notes from 18.3. to 17.12.1968, KA.

unexpected and came about by pure chance at a meeting of the society. When the SAK was asked to nominate a representative for the recognition committee, the chairman, Niilo Hämäläinen, looked round the room, said 'Isn't that new girl someone with enough time to do the job?' and pointed to Halonen.[17] Thirty years later Tarja Halonen became Finland's first woman president.

Members of the recognition committee attended not as individuals but as representatives of, in all, forty-one Finnish societies, parties, trade unions, youth and student organisations, sports federations and so on. They represented a total of some 1.5 million people.[18] East German newspapers proudly reported a 'huge mass movement' of friends of the GDR in Finland, representing a third of the total population of the country. This was, of course, a gross exaggeration, not to say falsification. It was possible for a single person – say a woman student – to be counted nine times over if she happened to be a member of the Communist Party, the People's Democratic women's movement, and youth, student, peace and sports organisations and also belonged to both a local and a central students' union. Such multifarious membership of 'progressive' leftist societies was in fact the rule, rather than the exception, in the Finland of the early 1970s.

The unambiguous goal of the movement was to make Finland the first non-communist country in the world to establish full diplomatic relations with the GDR.[19] Its main methods were to exercise direct influence on the political leadership and top civil servants, improve general knowledge of the GDR and set up contacts with researchers and other experts. In 1970–2 the Friendship Society, along with the committee, organised special subject weeks in various parts of the country. In the programme for these weeks cultural themes with a strong political message were dominant. A typical example was a demonstration, in typical GDR style, that the East German workers' and peasants' version of the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was the 'correct' one and that the classics were cherished in the GDR in a more progressive way than in West Germany. The Finns had to be convinced that the GDR was a socially, economically and culturally important, wealthy and progressive state which was being unfairly treated by the international community.[20]

Of course the GDR tried to offer the Finns the best cultural events imaginable. If the famous symphony orchestra from Leipzig, the Gewandhaus, gave a concert in the House of Culture in Helsinki, it was important to ensure that the listeners remembered the experience with pleasure for as long as possible after the event. Even more important to the East Germans, those same listeners should remember with special warmth the German state of workers and peasants.

17 Interview with Niilo Hämäläinen on 16 Jan. 2001.

18 Rules, annual reports and annual plans of Finland's commission for the recognition of the GDR, 1973, Finnish–East German Friendship Society, KA.

19 Minutes of the Politbureau of Finland's Communist Party, 14 Jan. 1970, 1B SKP Ac MF 97 Kansan Arkisto (KansanA, People's Archives), Helsinki.

20 Rules, annual reports and working plans of the Recognition Committee for the GDR, Annual report from 1 Jan. 1971 to 30 Apr. 1972, KA.

Finland's German policy in the framework of European détente

Since 1955 the main aim of the USSR's German policy had been to set up a European Security Conference (ESC) which would confirm the status quo in Europe, that is retain the existing borders as of 1945. In the late 1950s and early 1960s distrust of Soviet motives behind the proposed ESC, including the blatant attempt to gain a European settlement without the participation of the Americans, was strong in the Western Alliance.

The European Security Conference idea appeared in Finnish–Soviet relations for the first time in June 1966, when the Soviet Prime Minister, Aleksei Kosygin, visited Finland. The 'Budapest Appeal', calling for a pan-European security conference, made in March 1969 at a meeting of the Warsaw Pact in the Hungarian capital, was in many respects more moderate than anything that had gone before. Where the German question was concerned the USSR seemed to be content with de facto recognition of the GDR instead of full diplomatic recognition. Moreover, Soviet hostility to possible participation by the United States and Canada appeared to have been mitigated.

The Soviet ambassador to Helsinki, A. E. Kovalev, met President Kekkonen at the beginning of April 1969, soon after the Warsaw Pact meeting in Budapest. Kovalev expressed his government's hopes that the German question could be resolved as a part of a wider European security policy, and asked the Finns to prepare a proposal for a European security conference and to contribute actively to the preparations. Kekkonen was very sceptical: could anything good come of such a conference? He feared that the mutual hostility of the two German states alone might lead to failure. Nonetheless he promised Kovalev that the Finnish government would think seriously about the matter.[21]

Kekkonen believed that the USSR's main aim of confirming the status quo in Europe did not conflict with Finland's basic national interests. On the other hand, he feared that it might be difficult for Finland to convince the West that it *was* acting in favour of its national interests rather than as a Soviet puppet. Therefore Finland would have to table a proposal of its own which would differ from earlier Soviet initiatives. No preconditions should be made; the question of the existence of two German states and the principle of confirming existing borders should not be mentioned. In addition the United States and Canada should be invited to the conference.

The Finnish government published its proposal for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, CSCE, on 5 May 1969. It expressed its willingness to organise the preparatory talks and offered to host the summit meeting in Helsinki. Finland, it insisted, was better placed than any other European country to host the conference, as well as its preliminaries. The justification for this was surprising and courageous: 'Finland has good relations with all countries that are concerned about European security in Europe. Her response to the most vital security problem, namely the German question, has been highly respected by all parties in involved.'[22]

21 Juhani Suomi, *Taistelu puolueettomuudesta. Urho Kekkonen 1968–1972* (Helsinki: Otava 1996), 202–3.

22 Ulkopoliittisia lausuntoja ja asiakirjoja (ULA, Foreign Political Statements and Documents of the Finnish Government), Helsinki 1969, 65.

Naturally there was not a word about the possibility that the German question might prove a decisive stumbling block in even the preparatory phase of the CSCE. If Finland could not demonstrate that it was treating both Germanys even-handedly, the initiative would certainly fail.

What prompted this bold move on the part of the Finns? The whole idea of the proposal was against the holy writ of Finland's policy of neutrality, which since 1948 had been predicated on its right – and obligation – to hold aloof from great power conflicts. An adventurous initiative like the CSCE would automatically draw Finland right into those conflicts. Moreover, the whole idea of the European Security Conference was so firmly labelled as a Soviet initiative that going along with it would be undoubtedly be regarded in the West as another sign of 'Finlandisation'.

The original CSCE initiative was rather different from what the project finally became. Keijo Korhonen, at that time a senior officer in the political department of the Foreign Ministry, has since described it as 'the sheet anchor' of Finland's German policy. The aim was to safeguard Finland's policy of neutrality in relation to this single most difficult matter, and nothing else. In other words, the CSCE initiative was originally intended to be an instrument of Finland's policy of neutrality rather than an aim in itself. 'We were of course not so naive as to think in May 1969 that the Finnish government's circular would actually lead to some kind of a conference. At best we would be able to organise some kind of diplomatic tea party in Helsinki', wrote Korhonen some thirty years later. According to him this was 'a mustard seed that grew into a spreading tree. But future historians should not think that it was intended as a tree. It just grew.'[23]

Another misunderstanding needs to be dispelled. The CSCE initiative was based on Finland's official doctrine of non-recognition of divided states, the linchpin of its policy. 'Why should we have ruined everything by recognising the German states?' Korhonen asks. In other words, the main aim of the CSCE initiative, at least until 1972, was to freeze the German question and to escape Soviet and East German pressure to recognise the GDR. Another contemporary, Risto Hyvärinen, head of the political department of the Foreign Ministry from 1967 to 1972, also affirms in his memoirs that the Finland's CSCE initiative was an attempt to solve the German problem rather than having been put forward for its own sake, although Finland was certainly the best host for such a conference.[24]

The shift in Finland's foreign policy from 1969 was made possible by the emergence of détente. The Finnish government was extremely eager to see its policy of neutrality admitted unreservedly by the East as well as the West. The Finns were particularly worried that since the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1968 the Soviets had persistently refused to mention the phrase 'Finland's policy of neutrality' in communiqués of official visits by heads of states and government ministers. In response, the Finns took the bull by the horns: an active and peaceful policy of neutrality should be Finland's way of participating in international politics.

23 Keijo Korhonen, 'Siihen aikaan kun Suomi Saksat tunnusti', *Kanava*, 9 (1991), 564.
24 Risto Hyvärinen, *Virkamiehiä, viekkautta, vakoilijoita* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000), 99.

Together with the CSCE initiative, the highlights of Finland's new policy of active neutrality were membership of the UN Security Council in 1969–70 (which exposed Finland to the risk of drifting into the conflicts between the great powers), and the hosting of the first phase of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in Helsinki in autumn 1969. At the same time Finland's trade relations with the European Economic Community (EEC) had to be reorganised. An interesting intermediate phase was the Nordek Plan, originally a Danish initiative to establish a free trade association among the Nordic countries. The plan failed because the USSR was from the beginning very hostile to Finland's participation in it. Another initiative based on Finland's active policy of neutrality which foundered on the rock of Soviet opposition was the candidacy of the Finnish diplomat Max Jakobson for the post of UN Secretary-General in succession to U Thant.

Surprisingly enough, in February 1970 the Soviets suggested to Kekkonen that the FCMA treaty should be renewed for another twenty years, although the current treaty was not due to expire until 1975. The obvious intention was to reconfirm the military articles of the treaty – which were based on the threat of Germany invading the USSR through Finnish territory – only weeks after West Germany and the GDR had begun negotiations on eliminating violence from their future relations and recognising the 1945 borders in Europe. Thus the unresolved German question remained as a hidden but still powerful influence on Finland's geopolitical situation.

Kekkonen's 'Germany package'

The end of the 1960s saw significant changes in international politics resulting from East–West détente and the Ostpolitik of the West German Federal Chancellor, Willy Brandt. President Kekkonen gradually came to believe that Finland ought to respond by modifying its policy towards divided Germany. The main architects of Finland's German policy in the Foreign Ministry – Risto Hyvärinen and his closest assistant Keijo Korhonen – took it as their premise that Finland should extort the highest possible price for recognition of the two German states. Consequently, in May 1971 they prepared a plan whereby the following four proposals should be put to both German states:

1. Helsinki would establish diplomatic relations with both Bonn and East Berlin;
2. a treaty of non-violence would be signed with both Bonn and East Berlin;
3. all remaining financial and judicial questions would be resolved, particularly with regard to damage caused in Finnish Lapland by the German troops in 1944–5; and
4. both German states would recognise Finland's neutrality.

Owing to a damaging leak of information by Foreign Minister Väinö Leskinen at the meeting of the Nordic foreign ministers in Copenhagen in early September 1971, Kekkonen had to launch his 'Germany package' several months earlier than he had originally intended. On 10 September 1971 the Finnish government published

a note, addressed to both German states, proposing negotiations on the four issues listed above.[25] The unlucky timing of Finland's proposal was highly detrimental to its relations with West Germany. Bonn refused to talk with the Finns about the package and stalled the beginning of negotiations for fourteen months, until November 1972. With the FRG harshly criticising the Finnish proposal on the grounds that it favoured the GDR and that the Finns were merely a mouthpiece for the Soviets, it became extremely difficult to treat both German states equally.

Among all the initiatives of Finland's foreign policy during the Cold War there is none whose challenge matches that which the Germany package represented to the USSR and to the two German states. For example, any commitment to non-violence in relations between Finland and the German states would have nullified the first article of the FCMA treaty, which referred specifically to the German military threat against the USSR. The proposed recognition of Finnish neutrality by the German states also went far beyond what the USSR was prepared to accept at that time. Leskinen's leaking of important details of the package, including the proposed recognition of neutrality, was tantamount to waving a red rag before the Soviet bull. It is by no means clear that Finland wanted to weaken, much less tear up, the FCMA treaty; nevertheless, the Finnish politicians were well aware of the implications.[26]

In challenging the USSR, Finland was also challenging the FRG – and in the most sensitive area of all, recognition of the GDR. Even as late as autumn 1971 the threat of sanctions under the Hallstein Doctrine remained very real.

Irritating as the Finnish proposal may have been to the GDR, the SED politburo had decided by 14 September that it had to be accepted and negotiations began as rapidly as possible. But the SED could not possibly make any final decision on the Finnish proposal without consulting 'headquarters', so on 11 October 1971 an East German delegation, led by the Deputy Foreign Secretary Paul Scholz, flew to Moscow for two days of talks with their Soviet opposite numbers. The Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Nikolai Rodionov, hosted the meeting.

Both delegations agreed on their assessment of Finland's Germany package. It presented two serious problems. First, the non-violence proposal looked like an attempt to undermine the FCMA treaty. This was totally unacceptable since it would 'send the wrong message to other socialist countries'. Second, the GDR could not recognise Finland's neutrality: 'At most it would be possible to respect Finland's ambition to practise such a foreign policy.'[27] 'Send the wrong message to other socialist countries?' This quote is one of the very few pieces of evidence explaining why the USSR refused to recognise Finland's policy of neutrality just after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Finland's example was potentially dangerous because the European allies of the USSR would appeal to it in order to achieve in their relations with Moscow the status that Finland already had.

25 Note verbale, 10 Sept. 1971 (to the governments of the FRG and the GDR), 7 D 2 F 312, UM.

26 Hentilä, *Kaksi Saksaa ja Suomi*, 126–7.

27 Zusammenfassende Ergebnis der Konsultation mit dem sowjetischen Aussenminister über dem finnischen Vorschlag, den 11.–12.10.1971, gez. Scholz, MfAA C 793, PAAA.

As for West Germany, it was not until February 1972, six months after the proposed Germany package had been published, that Finland's Foreign Ministry received the first official answer from Bonn. The FRG expressed a willingness to exchange information, but opined that the time was not yet ripe to begin actual negotiations. Confidential talks could be held on the recognition of Finland's neutrality, but only in connection with the proposed CSCE. Relations between the two countries would be severely strained if Finland rushed to recognise the GDR before the German–German basic agreement (*Grundlagenvertrag*) had been finalised. The consequences for Finland might be serious; in particular, it would render the country unsuited to hosting the CSCE summit. The FRG would not take part in a conference in a capital city in which the GDR had an embassy with full diplomatic rights, even if the FRG had the same.[28]

A masterpiece of Finnish diplomacy?

'The positive developments in European politics which have emerged recently will contribute to the alleviation of political tensions and to new and lasting arrangements in Europe. One of the results of this development is a notable mitigation of the disagreements between the Great Powers over the German question':[29] thus the Finnish government's introduction to the proposed package, published on 10 September 1971. It was timed to link with the Berlin Agreement signed by the four victorious powers a week earlier (3 September 1971). This coupling was reiterated when the Finnish government renewed its proposal in summer 1972: the Berlin Agreement came into effect on 3 June. Finland's suggested solution to the German question explicitly referred to the Agreement, although, as Ulrich Wagner has pointed out, this was obviously contradictory. Finland had always appealed to Article 10 of the Paris peace treaty of 1947, which looked forward to a final peace treaty with Germany, and it was on the non-existence of that final treaty that Finland had founded its doctrine of non-recognition of divided states. The Berlin Agreement could not in any way be identified as such a treaty, for it concerned only the FRG, which did not, in 1972, have the slightest intention of recognising the GDR. (The Moscow and Warsaw treaties had not yet been ratified.)[30]

In all official contacts Finland strove to treat the two German states even-handedly. This was on the whole successful, although each at times protested that the Finns were favouring the other. President Kekkonen's decision to start a second round of negotiations on the German package, initially involving the GDR only, in summer 1972 has been viewed by some as a serious slip in the policy of neutrality. In fact, a treaty between Finland and the GDR had been drawn up and signed before the FRG had even agreed to sit down at the negotiating table. Kekkonen decided to act

28 Aufnahme von diplomatischen Beziehungen mit Finnland, Besprechung mit den drei Mächten und Nato-Partnern, gez. Thomas 17 July 1972, Ref. 304, Bd. 366, PAAA.

29 Suomen hallituksen tiedonanto 11 Sept. 1971 (note from the Finnish government), in ULA 1971, 77.

30 Ulrich Wagner, *Finnlands Neutralität. Eine Neutralitätspolitik mit Defensivallianz* (Hamburg: Verlag Christoph von der Ropp, 1974), 53–4.

after waiting for almost a year for a reply from Bonn. Abandoning the package would have meant bending to the will of the FRG.

Finland would probably have been better advised to do nothing at all pending the ratification of the German–German *Grundlagenvertrag*, to which the FRG repeatedly appealed when castigating the Finns for impetuosity and for misinterpreting the international situation. It seems that the Finns were motivated chiefly by the schedule for the CSCE process: the first phase of negotiations was due to open in the Dipoli Hall, near Helsinki, in November 1972. The fortuitous coincidence of the signing of the Berlin Agreement was seized on by the Finnish government as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

The normalisation of the German question by perpetuating the two-state model in a framework of European détente had been an integral part of the treaty of Moscow signed by the Soviet and West German governments in August 1970. The Finnish proposal went much further than the Moscow treaty, but Finland's allegation that the June 1971 Berlin Agreement constituted a 'permanent solution to the German question' was certainly optimistic, if not a downright untruth.

The wording of the non-violence principle in the Finnish proposal was almost identical to that in Brandt's Eastern Treaties, that is it effectively proposed a qualitatively defined non-aggression pact. The Finns coupled this with an insistence on their right to maintain neutrality at all times, in the face both of action by other contracting parties and of action by a third party affecting the territory of a contracting party. Because the same kind of proposal was made to both German states it inevitably affected Articles 1 and 2 of the Finnish–Soviet FCMA treaty. To Finland, neutrality and non-aggression were two sides of the same coin. If Finland had signed a non-aggression pact with both Germanys, would this not have voided, or at least reduced the importance of, the FCMA treaty? If Finland's aim was not to abolish the treaty outright, it was at least to get a clear recognition of its policy of neutrality from both German states. This clearly constituted a challenge to the USSR.

Speaking of neutrality, it is important to note that the reference was not to judicial neutrality as a status in international law but to the recognition of de facto neutrality on the ground. The final version of the Finland–GDR treaty spoke not of 'recognising' the policy of neutrality but of 'respecting' it. East German experts argued that it was impossible in international law formally to 'recognise' a policy. In obedience to Soviet demands the final text was further watered down to 'respecting Finland's aim to practise a policy of neutrality'.[31]

Knowing the successful outcome of the Germany package we can now, with hindsight, see the Finnish proposal of September 1971 as an attempt to contribute actively to the negotiation process between East and West in search of a wider European solution. The Finnish proposal could also be seen as conscious preliminary

31 Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen zwischen den Delegationen der DDR und Finnland über die Herstellung diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Staaten, July–Sept. 1972, MfAA C 1195, PAAA; Suomi-SDT 13. kokous Berliinissä 29.8.1972, 7 D F 311, UM.

to hosting the European Security Conference. Additionally it can be considered as a sign of Finland's changing relations with the EEC. On the day when the package was published President Kekkonen said in a broadcast on radio and television: 'Withdrawing the German question from the agenda was not the only challenge to Finland's foreign policy. This means that the work we have done for the CSCE conference may turn out to be fruitful in the short term as well.'[32] However, in September 1971 nobody, not even Kekkonen, could have felt any certainty that the Germany package would have any success, and we are bound to conclude that Finland was playing a game of chance in which the risk was extremely high.

The last victim of the Hallstein Doctrine?

The FRG had begun watering down the Hallstein Doctrine as far back as the late 1960s: in 1967 it established diplomatic relations with Romania and in 1968 restored relations with Yugoslavia, despite the fact that both these countries already had relations on the same level with the GDR. But this looser interpretation of the Hallstein Doctrine did not appear to apply to Finland: even in the early 1970s the German question was still tied in a knot which seemed impossible to undo. As long as the Basic Treaty between the two German states remained unsigned, the FRG did not want Finland to recognise the GDR. Bonn was still citing this principle in November 1972.[33] In this sense Finland was the last victim of the Hallstein Doctrine, as it had been the first.

In May 1972 the West German Foreign Minister, Walter Scheel, again warned Finland that Bonn would not agree to the CSCE preliminaries taking place in Helsinki if Finland went ahead and recognised the GDR. 'Bonn is blackmailing us', was Kekkonen's comment in his diary.[34] A couple of weeks later Kekkonen asked Viktor Maltsev, the Soviet ambassador in Helsinki, if he thought that the FRG really would halt the preliminaries of the CSCE, and prevent Helsinki from hosting them, if Finland recognised the GDR.[35] Maltsev promised to seek an answer from his government. About a month later he reported that high-ranking sources in Moscow believed that the West Germans would have no real chance of disturbing the CSCE process.

How serious were West Germany's warnings to Finland? It appears that the federal government was trying to ride two horses at the same time. Publicly it criticised Finland harshly, while privately sending messages to the Finns that the threats were not to be taken seriously. They conveyed this message directly to Kekkonen and indirectly to the Soviet leaders and even the East German delegation, which was

32 Tasavallan presidentin radio- ja televisiopuhe (Radio and TV broadcast by the President of the Republic), 11 Sept. 1971, in ULA 1971, 82.

33 Verhandlungen zwischen den Delegationen der Republik Finnland und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Nov. 8, 1972. 7 D 2 F 311, UM.

34 *Urho Kekkosen päiväkirjat* (Urho Kekkonen's Diaries), ed. Juhani Suomi, Vol. 3 (Helsinki: Otava, 2003), 258 (31 May 1972).

35 Kekkonen's Memorandum on the recognition of the two Germanys and on the CSCE, 3 July 1972. Kekkonen's Yearbook 1972 MK no. 138, UKA.

negotiating with the Finns on the Germany package in August 1972 in Helsinki and East Berlin.

Finland's Germany package and the CSCE initiative were aimed at precisely the same goals as Brandt's Ostpolitik: easing tensions and calming the situation at the heart of Europe. Despite its threats, the FRG could not really have stayed outside the CSCE, hence it was forced to reassure Finland behind the scenes that its publicly expressed criticism and threats of sanctions in accordance with the Hallstein Doctrine were mere posturing.

West Germany's resolution paid off: it successfully averted the recognition of the GDR without losing face. Shortly afterwards the magic line was crossed with the signing of the basic *Grundlagenvertrag* between the two German states on 21 December 1972. Thereafter the West Germans felt no need to protest against the groundswell in favour of recognising the GDR. In September 1971, when the Finnish government brought out its package, the GDR had full diplomatic relations with only thirty countries. By 7 January 1973 Finland was fifty-seventh in the order of countries which had recognised the GDR. The last major state to fall in line was the United States, which established full diplomatic relations with East Germany on 4 September 1974. In the meantime, on 18 September 1973, both German states had also become members of the United Nations.[36]

Conclusions

The expectations of the two German states with regard to Finland were entirely at odds. Whereas East Germany placed great hopes in 'the most progressive country in the capitalist world', West Germany feared that Finland might become be the first non-communist country to recognise the GDR. What the GDR wanted from Finland was precisely what the FRG most feared. East Germany was optimistic because Finland was such a good friend of the USSR; West Germany was fearful for the same reason, believing that the USSR might press Finland into recognising the GDR.

Up to the early 1970s Finland caused the makers of West German foreign policy more headaches than any other non-communist state. It was certainly the weakest link in the blockade of the GDR based on the Hallstein Doctrine. The same doctrine caused a corresponding number of headaches to the Finns, who had reason to fear that the USSR might react to it in the most unpleasant fashion by invoking the FCMA treaty. This in fact happened in 1958 and 1961 during the two Berlin crises.

When the FCMA treaty was extended for twenty years in 1955 and again – prematurely – in 1970, not one jot or tittle of the original treaty was changed on either occasion. The USSR was anxious to ensure the extension of the treaty well in advance: in 1955 it still had three years to run, and in 1970 all of five years. On both occasions the haste was partly due to the lurking spectre of the German question.

36 *DDR-Handbuch*, Hrsg. vom Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen, 2nd edn (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1979), 286–7.

On both occasions the USSR was making radical changes to its German policy; and whenever there was talk of Germany, the FCMA treaty was on the agenda. It is fair to say that the USSR's policy towards Finland was a part of, or at least closely connected with, its German policy.

In 1955, when the FRG joined NATO, the USSR abandoned its aim of uniting Germany and established diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic. At that point in history, the extension of the FCMA treaty was a way of formally enshrining the supposed military threat from (West) Germany and its allies in Finnish–Soviet relations.

In 1970 the USSR was anxious to extend the FCMA treaty on its existing basis before signing a non-aggression treaty, then on the negotiating table, with the FRG. Here again the goals that the USSR had set for the FCMA treaty were closely connected with its own German policy. Finns have been unable or unwilling to recognise this fact. The reason is probably to be found in a legalistic way of thinking inherited from the 'years of oppression' when Finland was a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. According to this way of thinking, Finnish relations with the East consisted of bilateral settlements between a small Finland defending its rights and a neighbouring great power threatening Finnish interests. This has prevented Finns from seeing that Russian, and subsequently Soviet, policy concerning Finland was at least partly motivated by factors only marginally related to Finland's own interests.

At two points in history the USSR was more active than usual on behalf of the GDR: at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, when it presented the Western powers with a proposal for a peace treaty with Germany; and once again for a brief period after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. On both occasions, the USSR suggested that Finland could serve as an example for others. But after Finland launched its CSCE initiative in May 1969, the USSR's attitude was clear: Finland's suitability as a pacemaker in the CSCE process and as the host for a possible summit was a much more valuable asset than recognition of the GDR. The Soviet leaders told Kekkonen bluntly that Finland should not endanger these opportunities by making precipitate changes in its German policy. The East Germans were extremely disappointed to find that 'Big Brother' did not give them any true support on the recognition issue.

In his study on the relations between Sweden and the GDR Andreas Linderoth comes to a similar conclusion. Although the prospect of persuading neutral Sweden to recognise the GDR was pleasing to the Eastern bloc, the USSR never really pressured the Swedish government into doing so. In fact Linderoth considers that the USSR gave East Germany a fairly free hand in its relations with Sweden.[37]

Sven Holtsmark, studying the relations between Norway and the GDR, comes to a very different conclusion: here, East Germany's foreign policy was dependent on Soviet interests and had very little room for manoeuvre.[38] The difference between

37 Andreas Linderoth, *Kampen för erkännande. DDR:s utrikespolitik gentemot Sverige 1949–1972* (Milo: Studio Historica Lundensia. Historiska institutionen vid Lunds universitet, 2002), 14, 304.

38 Sven Holtsmark, *Avmaktens diplomati. DDR i Norge 1949–1973* (Oslo: Den Norske historiske forening, 1999), 291.

Linderoth's conclusions and Holtsmark's can be explained by the simple fact that the USSR kept a more careful watch on the GDR's relations with Norway, which was a NATO member, than with Sweden, which was neutral. Moreover, Holtsmark concentrates on the very delicate issues of espionage and intelligence.

The GDR's relations with its northern neighbour, Denmark, were of course at least as tightly controlled by the Soviets as its relations to Norway. Espionage and successful (or indeed unsuccessful) defections of Stasi (state security) agents via Denmark to the West cast a distinct cloud over Danish–East German relations.[39]

To sum up, the GDR had a relatively free hand with regard to Sweden, but Soviet control was tight over its relations with Norway and Denmark as NATO countries. East Germany's policy towards Finland was not as independent as it was towards Sweden: with regard to Finland the GDR had to respect the special interests of 'Big Brother', which were conditioned by the FCMA treaty. The military articles of this treaty were an expression of the USSR's obsessive interest in West German activities in northern Europe. That is why Finland's 'Germany package' was discussed no less than seven times in the inner circle of the GDR leadership, that is, the SED politburo. By contrast, the opening of diplomatic relations between the GDR and Sweden was prepared by the Foreign Ministry and was merely confirmed by the politburo in December 1972.

39 Karl Christian Lammers, 'Nachbarschaft und Nicht-Annerkennung. Probleme der Beziehungen zwischen Dänemark und der DDR (1949–1973)', in Ulrich Pfeil, ed., *Die DDR und der Westen* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2001), 273–90.