East Germany's North European Policy prior to International Recognition of the German Democratic Republic

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Abstract

The main aim of the GDR's foreign policy was to promote the survival and stabilisation of the SED dictatorship, and the so-called 'worldwide revolution', by seeking external recognition. After it was granted full sovereignty in 1954–5 the East German state carefully cultivated relations with Western countries. The Scandinavian countries received special attention on the basis of common history, natural economic and transport links, a close relationship with their respective communist parties and East German conformity to Soviet policy in the Baltic region. Up to the 1970s the GDR's main aim was to end its own international isolation. Despite a few spectacular successes, not even Sweden was won over and the final breakthrough did not come until the government of the FRG embarked on its new and successful Ostpolitik. In 1972–3 the Scandinavian countries were among the first officially to recognise the GDR.

Introduction

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded on 7 October 1949 as the second German state. Despite its formal autonomy and, after 1954–5, its sovereignty, the GDR's isolation in the domain of foreign policy persisted until the early 1970s as a consequence of the claim of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to be the sole representative of Germany. When the FRG commenced diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1955, it made this claim to sole representation into a political axiom, christened the 'Hallstein Doctrine' after Walter Hallstein, state secretary in the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry). The FRG warned off neutral and non-aligned

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states from recognising the GDR by defining the commencement of diplomatic relations as an 'unfriendly act' which would be answered with sanctions. The Doctrine was first used in 1957 against Yugoslavia, and remained a linchpin of Bonn's 'Germany policy' until the end of the 1960s.[1] To end this international isolation became a top priority of East German foreign policy.

Generally speaking, the main aim of that policy was to use recognition to help maintain and stabilise the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) and further the process of 'world revolution'.[2] A subordinate aim was to foster relations with Western states so as to improve the political and economic environment of the GDR. Until 1972–3, however, the stress was always on overcoming international isolation.

The GDR's foreign policy was modelled on that of the USSR, which since the mid-1950s had stressed the importance of 'friendly coexistence'. But because this principle of 'coexistence', originated by Lenin, included elements of both confrontation and co-operation, the GDR had to monitor the changing international situation and adapt its strategy and tactics so as to stress or play down one element or the other as required.[3] In the GDR, as in all East European states, foreign policy was directed by the party, in other words the SED. Key decisions were taken not by the foreign minister but by the politburo or personally by the general secretary of the SED.[4] The Soviet Union made the ground rules, severely restricting the GDR's room for manoeuvre.[5]

From the first, the SED's foreign policy attached great importance to northern Europe. East Germany was bound to this neighbouring region not just by a common history but also by natural economic and transport links. Also of importance were the links with Nordic communist parties that had been forged in the common struggle against fascism during the Spanish civil war and further strengthened by resistance to the Nazi occupation of Scandinavia or by a shared experience of concentration camps. East Germany's efforts to gain recognition from the Nordic countries were a favourite subject of research even before 1989.[6] Since then the opening up of archives

1 William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War. The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany 1949–1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Werner Kilian, *Die Halstein-Doktrin. Der diplomatische Krieg zwischen BRD und DDR 1977–1973. Aus den Akten der beiden deutschen Aussenministerien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001).

2 Bernd Kregel, *Aussenpolitik und Systemstabilisierung in der DDR* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1979).

3 See the entry on 'Friedliche Koexistenz (Peaceful co-existence)' in the *DDR Handbuch* issued by the Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Federal Ministry for Intra-German relations), ed. Hartmut Zimmermann (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), vol. 1, 482–3.

4 Detlef Nakath, 'Aussenpolitik', in Andreas Herbst, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan and Jürgen Winkler, eds., *Die SED. Geschichte – Organisation – Politik. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin Dietz, 1997), 263.

5 Jörg Roesler, 'Der Handlungsspielraum der DDR-Führung gegenüber der UdSSR. Zu einem Schlüsselproblem des Verständnisses der DDR-Geschichte', *Zeitschrift für Gewissenschaft* 4(1993), 293–304.

6 Friedrich Eymelt, *Die Tätigkeit der DDR in der nichtkommunistischen Ländern*, vol. II, *Die Nordischen Staaten* (Bonn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, 1970); Martin Saeter, 'Nordeuropa', in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen et al., eds., *Drei Jahrzehnte Aussenpolitik der DDR. Bestimmungsfaktoren, Instrumente, Aktionsfelder* (Munich, etc.: Oldenbourg, 1979), 501–12; Peter Lübbe, *Kulturelle Auslandsbeziehungen der DDR. Das Beispiel Finnland* (Bonn: Forschungsinstitut der Friendrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1981); Marcel Bulla and Karl-Heinz Rabe, 'Die Beziehungen der DDR zu den nordischen Staaten Schweden,

has substantially improved matters. The archives of the SED, which controlled the GDR's foreign policy, are freely accessible, but those of the Auswärtiges Amt, which now include the files of the former GDR foreign ministry, are still subject to a thirty-year rule. Nevertheless the sources now exist to provide a solid basis for work on the history, structures and machinery of the GDR's foreign policy.[7] The north European angle is now covered both by comprehensive histories and by studies on various bilateral relationships.[8]

The initial phase (1945–9)

In the last years of the Second World War, questions of foreign policy bulked large in the planned strategy of the KDP – the German Communist Party. Most communist exiles in both Scandinavia and the Soviet Union were determined that Germany's future foreign policy should be one of peace, acknowledging a duty to provide compensation for war damage and striving for international political, economic, social and cultural co-operation.[9] KPD members still in Scandinavian exile strove in vain to create a platform for the maintenance and development of contacts between Scandinavia and Germany. As soon as the War was over the SED leaders sought to resume the old links with northern communist parties that had been severed by the War. The first priority was to bring home the exiles. From the end of 1945 these tried and tested party returnees were eagerly sought after in the Soviet-occupied

Dänemark, Norwegen, Island und Finnland', in *Die Westpolitik der DDR. Beziehungen der DDR zu ausgewählten westlichen Industriestaaten in den 70er und 80er Jahren* (Melle: Knoth, 1989).

7 Ingrid Muth, *Die DDR-Außenpolitik 1949–1972. Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen* (Berlin: Links, 2000); Joachim Scholtyseck, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); Ulrich Pfeil, ed., *Die DDR und der Westen. Transnationale Beziehungen 1949–1989* (Berlin: Links, 2001).

8 Michael F. Scholz, 'Die Nordeuropa-Politik der DDR' (up to 1963), in Robert Bohn, Jürgen Elvert and Karl Christian Lammers, eds., *Deutsch-skandinavische Beziehungen nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 21–43; idem, 'Am Anfang stand der Handel. Zu den Beziehungen Schwedens zu Ostdeutschland 1945 bis 1949', *ZfG* (1992), 245–59; idem, 'Östen Undén und die schwedische Deutschlandpolitik in den fünfziger Jahren', *VJZ* (1993), 391–417; Andreas Linderoth, *Kampen för erkännande. DDR:s utrikespolitik gentemot Sverige 1949–1972* (Lund: Univ., 2002); Alexander Muschik, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten und das neutrale Schweden. Eine Dreiecksbeziehung im Schatten der offenen Deutschlandfrage 1949 bis 1972* (Münster: Lit.Verlag, 2005); Karl Christian Lammers, 'Nachbarschaft und Nichtanerkennung. Probleme der Beziehungen zwischen Dänemark und der DDR (1949–1973)', in Pfeil, *Die DDR und der Westen*, 273–90; Karl Christian Lammers, *'Hvad skal vi gøre ved tyskerne bagefter?' Det dansk-tyske forhold efter 1945* (Copenhagen: Det Schønbergske Forlag, 2005); Thomas Wegener Friis, *Den nye nabo. DDRs forhold til Danmark 1949–1960*, SFAH's skriftserie (Copenhagen, 2001); Sven G. Holtsmark, *Avmaktens diplomati. DDR i Norge 1949–1973* (Oslo: Den norske historiske foreningens skriftserie, 1999); Gro K. Hendriksen, 'Mellom allianselojalitet og markedsintresser. Forholdet mellom Norge og Öst-Tyskland 1949–1962', *Arbeiderhistorie* (1994); Dörte Putensen, *Im Konfliktfeld zwischen Ost und West. Finnland, der Kalte Krieg und die deutsche Frage (1947–1973)* (Berlin: Verlag Spitz, 2000); Valur Ingimundarson, 'Targeting the Periphery. The Role of Iceland in East German Foreign Policy 1949–1989', in *Cold War Policy* 1 (2001), 113–39; Thomas Wegener Friis and Andreas Linderoth, eds., *DDR og Norden. Østtysk-nordiske relationer 1949–1989* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2005).

9 See Peter Erler, Horst Laude and Manfred Wilke, *'Nach Hitler kommen wir'. Dokumente zur Programmatik der Moskauer KPD-Führung 1944/45 für Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1994), 266; Jan Peters, *Exilland Schweden (*Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1984), 207 ff.; Helmut Müssener, *Exil in Schweden* (Munich: Hanser), 1974, 214 ff.

zone of Germany and by the SED/KPD, which was naturally anxious to exploit their local knowledge and their personal contacts and relationships.[10] In the early postwar period, however, none of the occupied zones of Germany was allowed to formulate any sort of foreign policy. While notions of foreign policy did receive some attention in the Soviet zone, it was always against an economic background.

But even the attempts of former immigrants to forge trade links with Scandinavia were blocked by the Soviet military administration in Germany, which was reluctant to relinquish control of the trade with Norway and Sweden that had flourished since 1946.[11] As the Western occupation zones began to coalesce into a state, the Soviet administration began to hand over control of certain areas of responsibility to German authorities. This enabled the SED to develop trade links with the Nordic countries in collaboration with their respective communist parties and promise advantageous trade deals in return for their work for the party. Bilateral trade with the Scandinavian countries was conducted on a compensatory basis; formal trade agreements were made with Norway and Sweden, but not with Denmark. Even at this early state the East German authorities meditated setting up a trade delegation in Stockholm, where the idea met with a warm welcome.[12]

In these early years the SED set up a foreign press office and a foreign sub-department within the press department with the task of 'spreading enlightenment abroad' and 'supporting and supervising the German anti-fascist bodies still existing abroad'. It was headed by Rudi Wetzel (1909–92), just returned from exile in Sweden and very keen to include the Nordic countries in this project.[13] The second SED congress in September 1947, which was attended by high-ranking Communist Party officials from Norway and Sweden, gave a fresh impetus to the SED's international activity. In January 1948 a foreign affairs department was set up, originally under the title of 'Bureau of International Co-operation', headed by Franz Dahlem (1892–1981).[14] By February Dahlem was already considering the foundation of a Swedish–German friendship society on the model of that already agreed with Poland.[15] A lively exchange of delegations with other communist parties was also evident in the SED's 'cultural congress' in May 1948, the first event to be attended by delegates from all the Nordic communist parties. The Norwegian and Finnish parties reciprocated in spring 1949 by inviting the internationally experienced SED representative Anton

10 Cf. Michael F. Scholz, *Skandinavische Erfahrungen erwünscht? Nachexil und Remigration. Die ehemaligen KPD-Emigranten in Skandinavien und ihr weiteres Schicksal in der SBZ/DDR* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000).

11 Michael F. Scholz, 'Zur Internationalen Arbeit von KPD/SED vor Gründung der DDR. Das Beispiel Schweden', in Elke Scherstjanoi, ed., *Provisorium für längstens ein Jahr* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1993).

12 Memo by B. Åkerrén, 24 Aug. 1948, Government Archives, Stockholm (RA), Foreign Ministry (UD), HP 2510.

13 Michael F. Scholz, 'Rudi Wetzel – Schicksal eines ehemaligen Schweden-Emigranten in der SBZ/DDR', *Exil* 2 (1992), 53–66.

14 For biographies of GDR nationals see Helmut Müller-Enbergs, Jan Wielgohs and Dieter Hoffmann, eds., *Wer war wer? Ein biographisches Lexikon* (Berlin: Links, 2000).

15 Memo by Dahlem, 24 Feb. 1948, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO, BA), DY 30/IV 2/20/298.

Ackermann (1905–73).[16] At the same time the party leadership set up a foreign policy committee chaired by Herbert Warnke (1902–75), another former exile returned from the north. Its task was to monitor the Germany policies of other nations and to increase interest in Germany's current problems among the international public in general and democratic movements in particular, as well as to 'enlighten' the German public about the Allies' policy for Germany.[17] The resumption of links with northern Europe looked promising, but with the exception of party contacts, all further efforts subsequent to the Berlin blockade of 1948–9 foundered amidst the worsening international climate of the incipient Cold War.

Foreign policy without sovereignty (1949–54/5)

The emergence of opposing power blocs and the pointed constitution of a West German state eventually induced Stalin, the soviet leader, to yield to pressure from the SED, and from some of his own close associates, to set up a separate East German state. This did not, however, mean that Moscow had lost all hope of controlling the whole of Germany.[18] During the preliminaries for the foundation of the East German state, in autumn 1949, the SED unexpectedly announced the constitution of a foreign ministry. The announcement by the chairman of the SED and president-designate, Wilhelm Pieck (1876–1960), that 'of course we have little involvement in foreign policy as yet',[19] plainly belied the early efforts of the Soviet military administration to send German representatives abroad. The Soviets hoped that a vigorous drive for international recognition of the GDR would be advantageous to their own Germany policy, which had become a keystone of their overall foreign policy.

In theory, the highest authority in the GDR was the Volkskammer. It had a 'special committee for foreign affairs', chaired by Dahlem, but this remained a complete dead letter until the mid-1950s. The ostensible representative of the GDR abroad was its president. His orders and decrees had to be countersigned by the prime minister or other minister responsible. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, MfAA) was headed by the Christian Democrat Georg Dertinger (1902–68)[20] and the communist state secretary, Ackermann. The ministry was organised into departments, sub-departments and sections. For a long time north European affairs were considered comparatively unimportant and tended to migrate

16 Michael F. Scholz, 'Anton Ackermann und die Furubotn-Affäre 1949. Zu den Anfängen der Beziehungen NKP-SED', in Hermann Weber, ed., *Kommunisten verfolgen Kommunisten: stalinistischer Terror und 'Säuberungen' in den kommunistischen Parteien Europas seit den dreißiger Jahren* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1993), 450–8.

17 SED-Pressedienst, 23 April 1949; Kleines Sekretariat, 12 April 1949, SAPMO, BA, DY 30/J IV 2/3/18. See further Scholz, *Nordeuropa-Politik*.

18 Wilfried Loth, *Stalins ungeliebtes Kind. Warum Moskau die DDR nicht wollte* (Berlin: Rowohlt Berlin Verlag, 1994).

19 Siegfried Suckut, 'Die Entscheidung zur Gründung der DDR. Die Protokolle der Beratungen des SED-Parteivorstandes am 4. und 9. Oktober 1949', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (1991), 158. All translations of quotations are by the author.

20 Peter Joachim Lapp, *Georg Dertinger: Journalist – Aussenminister – Staatsfeind* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005).

from section to section, without autonomy. In practice, however, the ministry itself was not of great importance; decisions affecting foreign policy were taken by the SED leadership. When the first government was set up in 1949 the Prime Minister, Otto Grotewohl (1894–1964), made it quite clear that 'in practice, of course, the conduct of many political and organisational matters will remain in the hands of the secretariat of the politburo'.[21] Soon after the foundation of the GDR the Department of Foreign Affairs, which had been set up in August 1949 alongside the Foreign Policy Committee, was merged with the Department of International Co-operation, which was responsible for international party relationships, both being central elements in the SED apparatus. In future, foreign policy was to be a matter for more detailed discussion with 'brother parties'. The new department was responsible for preparing and implementing party decisions relating to foreign affairs and 'advised, co-ordinated and monitored' all other agencies on such matters. It was also responsible for the party organisations behind the missions that were to be set up abroad.[22] Alongside the SED general secretary, Walter Ulbricht (1893–1973), who retained supreme control over international activities, the chief voices in foreign policy were Ackermann, as chairman of the Foreign Policy Commission, and his deputy, Peter Florin (b. 1921).[23]

In his first foreign policy statement, on 24 October 1949, Dertinger announced that the keynote of his government's policy would be to 'prevent the revival of German imperialism with its lust for conquest, and establish peaceful and friendly relations between the German people and all other peoples'. He was in favour of 'the establishment of normal diplomatic, economic and other relations' between East Berlin and all those who were willing to 'establish such relations with the GDR on a basis of mutual respect and equality'.[24] Not surprisingly, the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the GDR was the USSR. By 25 October its example had been followed by Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, China, Hungary, North Korea, Poland and Romania. Outside the Soviet sphere of influence, however, no country was willing to establish such relations with the GDR. In December a British aide-mémoire made it clear to the Scandinavians that the policy of the British and of the Western allies in current circumstances was to avoid both de jure and de facto recognition of the GDR. Trade should be conducted only through private organisations; any other necessary relations must be conducted through the Soviet occupying power. Any participation by the GDR in international organisations was 'undesirable'. Not only Denmark and Norway, but also Sweden, fell in line with the Western powers.[25] The sole encouragement to East Berlin's hopes of making

21 Suckut, 'Entscheidung', 165.

22 Monika Kaiser, 'Die Zentrale der Diktatur – organisatorische Weichenstellungen, Struktur und Kompetenzen der SED-Führung in der SBZ/DDR 1946 bis 1952', in Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Historische DDR-Forschung* (Akademie-Verlag, 1993), 57 ff.

23 Scholz, *Nordeuropa-Politik*.

24 *Dokumente der Aussenpolitik der DDR* (*Dok. AP*), vol. 1 (Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1954), 38–9.

25 Karl Christian Lammers, 'Die Beziehungen der skandinavischen Staaten zur DDR bis zur Normalisierung in den siebziger Jahren', in Heiner Timmermann, ed., *Die DDR – Politik und Ideologie als Instrument* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999), 703–19.

international agreements with countries other than Soviet satellites was a trade agreement with Finland. Even the formal handover of sovereignty to the GDR on 25 March 1950 brought no better success.

The aim of Soviet foreign policy was European hegemony, a sine qua non of which was the removal of US armed forces. To this end, the USSR's policy towards Germany aimed at a united, though not yet communist, state which would be linked to the Soviets in the tradition of Bismarck and the Treaty of Rapallo. The 'Stalin Notes' issued by Moscow included wide-ranging proposals of this nature which were flatly rejected by the West as mere propaganda.[26] Thereafter Soviet diplomacy was conducted mainly in secrecy.

In accordance with a Soviet proposal, and initially under Soviet control, the GDR set up an intelligence service in summer 1951. Like its Soviet counterpart it was subordinated to the state secretary in the Foreign Ministry, that is, to Ackermann. The top Soviet adviser was Andrei Grouer (b. 1905), the then NKVD resident in Stockholm, but the practicalities were deputed to another experienced former Swedish exile, Richard Stahlmann (1891–1974), whose background was in conspiracy and guerrilla warfare.[27] In 1953, after a conflict of views in Moscow which had repercussions in East Berlin and removed Ackermann from the state secretariat, foreign espionage was integrated with the secretariat (later ministry) for state security under Ernst Wollweber (1898–1967). He too had many international contacts: since 1933 he had been directing a worldwide sabotage organisation based in Scandinavia.[28] Like Stahlmann, he had previously worked directly for the Soviet military information service.

GDR espionage did not extend beyond West Germany towards Scandinavia until the 1950s, when the state military information service, assisted by former emigrants and their contacts, began to construct networks in Denmark. Founder members included returned emigrants from Denmark, notably Waldemar Verner (1914–82), chief of the 'Sea Police', later the GDR's naval forces.[29]

Neither the party nor the MfAA attached any great importance to northern Europe. Commercial relationships tended to overshadow the still hesitant demands for recognition. Under Soviet direction, and in view of the increasing confrontation between East and West, East Germany was forced virtually to confine its trade to the Eastern bloc; but the Foreign Minister stressed, with particular reference to the Nordic states, that boosting trade with the West was still a priority. The Scandinavians

26 Jürgen Zarusky, ed., *Die Stalin-Note vom 10. März 1952. Neue Analysen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002).

27 Rolf Badstübner and Wilfried Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck – Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945–1953* (Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1994), 371; Peter Richter and Klaus Rösler, *Wolfs West-Spione. Ein Insider-Report* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1992), 13; Matthias Uhl, 'Richard Stahlmann (1891–1974). Ein Handlanger der Weltrevolution im Geheimauftrag der SED', in Dieter Krüger and Armin Wagner, eds., *Konspiration als Beruf. Deutsche Geheimdienstchefs im Kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Links, 2003), 84–110.

28 Jan von Flocken and Michael F. Scholz, *Ernst Wollweber. Saboteur, Minister, Unperson* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1994).

29 Andreas Kabus, *Auftrag Windrose. Der militärische Geheimdienst der DDR* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1993); Thomas Wegener Friis, *Den usynlige front. DDRs militrspionage mod Danmark* (Copenhagen: Syddansk Universitet, 2003); Scholz, *Skandinavische Erfahrungen*, 251.

themselves were interested in trade with the GDR and were willing to make certain concessions: for example, their consulates in West Berlin were allowed to maintain informal contacts with the East German government. Scandinavian jurists frequently asked themselves whether this was a road to de facto recognition; Finland (bound by treaty to the Soviet Union) and strictly neutral Sweden were particularly cautious in this respect. By contrast, GDR foreign policy, which was still entirely under Soviet control and aped Soviet attitudes at all times, remained passive.

Towards autonomy: foreign and north European policy, 1954/55–57

Soviet attempts to hinder the Paris Treaties and the FRG's accession to NATO proved unsuccessful. The USSR was forced to make substantial concessions while also embracing more decisive action, including a renewed concession of sovereignty to its German zone of occupation on 25 March 1954. The GDR government immediately reiterated its willingness 'to develop and maintain good and friendly relations with all peoples on the basis of mutual respect and equality'.[30] This new sovereignty encouraged East Berlin's hopes of finally winning recognition from the West; special efforts were made to obtain this, both de jure and de facto, from Sweden and Finland. On some matters, notably transit traffic and air traffic, the Germans were willing to meet the Scandinavians halfway in the hope of attaining an agreement at governmental level. To pave the way for such an agreement, cultural interchanges were developed and a 'publicity offensive' was launched.[31] However, the concession of sovereignty by the Soviets made no impression in the West. At a meeting in Copenhagen in May 1954 the Scandinavian foreign ministers declared that the time was 'not yet ripe' to recognise the GDR.[32] There had never been any chance of it from Norway and Denmark, which were members of NATO; but Sweden proved equally resolute. The Swedish Foreign Minister, Östen Undén (1886–1974), made this quite clear after consulting with the FRG.[33]

After the declaration of (ostensible) sovereignty, and pending the delegation of new duties, the GDR Foreign Ministry optimistically implemented a restructuring plan. This included a separate northern Europe section, while at ministerial level important, though for the moment tacit, decisions were taken on relations with Scandinavia. The real power still lay with the SED, the secretariat of the central committee and its foreign policy department, where restructuring of the international department once again downgraded the Nordic region. The Soviet sovereignty declaration did, however, open up new prospects for East Germany's foreign trade; efforts to extend it went hand in hand with efforts to create diplomatic – initially consular – representation. The Foreign Ministry set up delegations in a number of countries,

30 Dok. AP, vol. 1, 306.

31 Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Bestand MfAA (MfAA), A 7581, 'Plan für die Entwicklung der Beziehungen DDR-Schweden', 26 May 1954.

32 Utrikesdepartementets aktstycken 1954, II:12, Stockholm 1954, 65.

33 Memo from Östen Undén, 1 Nov. 1954, Archives of the Swedish Foreign Ministry (Utrikesdepartementets arkiv, Stockholm (UDA)), HP 12 Ct (5). See further Scholz, *Östen Undén*.

including Norway, Sweden and Denmark. To begin with these were mere 'flying organisations' which remained only as long as they were permitted to do so and created a market research network while also producing political reports for the MfAA.[34]

When the FRG joined NATO in 1955 the Soviets set up the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, or Warsaw Pact, a political and military alliance which naturally included the GDR. Within a month Ulbricht was telling a meeting of the SED central committee that the alliance would open up 'new perspectives' for GDR foreign policy. Referring back to previous declarations and evoking Germany's traditional closeness to the Baltic peoples, he outlined his country's future north European policy. It was to focus on 'joint efforts' to 'make the Baltic into a sea of freedom and friendly co-operation' and so promote 'peace throughout Europe'.[35] Peter Florin, head of the central committee's international department since 1953, warned that more attention needed to be paid to foreign affairs, particularly relations with the Baltic states. Ulbricht, concluding the meeting, said that priority had to be given to countries that did not belong to imperialist militaristic blocs, and particularly mentioned the Baltic region.[36]

Article 1 of the bilateral treaty between the GDR and the Soviet Union, signed on 20 September 1955, stipulated that the former was now 'free to decide its own internal and foreign policy, including relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, and the development of relations with other states'.[37] Nevertheless, apart from the socialist states East Germany's sphere of action was still virtually confined to technical contacts – information, communications, sport, culture and so on. The prospects seemed particularly favourable in those resolutely neutral neighbours, Sweden and Finland. With an eye to Nordic solidarity the GDR forged a foreign policy to cover the entire region. Even here, however, the fostering of relations required a clever touch and the exploitation of every potential new contact.

The Foreign Ministry made plans for a 'Baltic conference' under the slogan 'For peace, security and friendly co-operation in the Baltic region'. The idea was to arrange 'Baltic consultations in Baltic states' to discuss not only economics, communications and culture but also, and more importantly, political problems in the shadow of Soviet foreign policy, such as a refusal to accept foreign military bases and the stationing of atomic weapons in the Baltic region. East Germany feared that the West would draw Sweden into NATO via the Nordic Council. It was a matter that needed clarification, to say the least. The idea of exchanging parliamentary – or worker or union – delegations probably had Soviet influence behind it. In the last analysis the MfAA's chief objective was to mitigate Nordic hostility towards the GDR. East Germany participated in international conferences

34 Ministry for Foreign and Intra-German Trade (Ministeriums für Aussen- und Innerdeutschen Handel, MAI) to Bolz, 7 May 1954, MfAA, A 9266.

35 Walter Ulbricht, *Die Warschauer Konferenz und die neuen Aufgaben in Deutschland. 24. Tagung des ZK der SED, 1./2. Juni 1955* (Berlin: Dietz, 1955), 16.

36 Minutes of the 24th session of the Central Committee, SAPMO, BA, DY 30/IV 2/1/73.

37 Text in Keesing's *Archiv der Gegenwart* 25 (1955), 5370–1.

to resolve all kinds of questions which had no specific connection with potential recognition, but did underline certain important matters such as the establishment of offices in Nordic capitals to issue visas. Similarly, discussion of the legal legacy of the Nazi empire implicitly placed the legitimacy and sovereignty of the GDR on the agenda.[38] The 'neighbouring countries' sub-department of Department I (Europe) of the Foreign Ministry acquired a 'northern Europe section', which within a year had spawned special sections for all the Nordic countries. But the ministry still had only executive and supervisory powers; all strategic decisions were reserved to the SED. The Volkskammer's foreign policy committee, though it met regularly, had no part in decision-making.

Relations with Finland, which treated both German states equally, proved the most promising,[39] but the East Germans were never allowed to forget Finland's special relationship with the Soviet Union. East Berlin could not stir a step in matters involving Finland without Soviet approval. This was one reason why, when in a retrospective view of 1955, the GDR Foreign Ministry observed that the 'main focus' had to be Sweden. This was in any case justifiable in view of Sweden's position in Scandinavia, its non-aligned status and the long tradition of Swedish–German relations. Positive developments were also anticipated in Denmark, but little progress seemed to have been made with Norway.[40]

The Third SED Party Conference in March 1956 stressed that East Germany had a 'particular interest' in neighbourly co-operation with all states on the Baltic and called for a special agency to formulate and reshape policies for northern Europe. The Foreign Ministry set up a 'Committee for Baltic Affairs' to gather information about the status of the Baltic in international law and the relations between the socialist states situated on the Baltic and their neighbours, including the FRG and the Nordic states. Expert information on the trade, communications and culture of these neighbouring states was sought from former exiles in Scandinavia, who were enrolled in working groups for individual countries. Valuable guidance on contacts with northern Europe came from the GDR delegations in Moscow and Helsinki. By 1957 the MfAA was well informed about all the Nordic states and was obtaining political advice from academies and other research institutes. Decision-making bodies also recruited specialists. The experts of tomorrow were trained in the School of Administration in Forst Zinna, which had been founded before the GDR itself and later spawned the Institute for International Relations, formally a part of the GDR Academy of Law and Political Science.[41] Research into different countries was assigned to different universities. Northern Europe was assigned to the Nordic Institute of the University of Greifswald, described by Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl, on the occasion of its 500th anniversary in October 1956, as an

38 Concerning preparations for a Baltic conference (HA III/2), 26 May 1955, MfAA, A 7572.

39 Putensen, *Im Konfliktfeld zwischen Ost und West*.

40 Report on the GDR's relations with Scandinavia during 1955, n.d., MfAA, A 8875.

41 Andreas Herbst, Winfried Ranke and Jürgen Winkler, *So funktionierte die DDR. Lexikon der Organisationen und Institutionen* (Reinbek, 1994), vol. 1, 45–6.

'intermediary' between the GDR and northern Europe, to which he pledged his government's support.[42]

One of the few diplomatic resources available to the GDR in the West was propaganda. The Society for Cultural Links with Foreign Countries (Gesellschaft für kulturelle Verbindung mit dem Ausland, GkVA), founded in 1952, began extending its activities into the West in 1954–55,[43] co-ordinating the oft debated construction of state-funded friendship societies in the Nordic countries. The first were created in 1956, in Sweden and Finland; the Icelandic society did not gain government approval until late 1960. The establishment of a similar society in Denmark was hindered by anti-German feeling, but was carried through, again in 1960, thanks to a financial crisis that hit the highly fissile Danish Communist Party. In Norway, which had no reserve of former German communist exiles but had participated in the struggle against Nazism before 1945, the GDR used the existing structures of an umbrella organisation, covering all socialist countries, which the East German government helped to finance.[44]

'The Baltic must be a sea of peace': the keynote of GDR policy for northern Europe

West Germany's accession to NATO, and the ensuing proliferation of marine bases and NATO activity, were perceived by the USSR as a threat to its dominance of the region. It responded with a campaign to have the Baltic declared a neutral sea.[45] The GDR Foreign Ministry considered this aim to be wholly realistic: after all, nearly four-fifths of the Baltic coast belonged to three socialist states or to Finland and Sweden, both unaligned states with a determined policy of neutrality. The fly in the ointment was of course the FRG, which the GDR was committed to 'opposing'. In the long term Moscow hoped to 'detach' Denmark and Norway, closely bound by history and geopolitics with the Baltic realm, from NATO. However, this Soviet charm offensive came to an abrupt end with the bloody repression of the Hungarian revolt in late 1956.

Moscow pressed for all the Warsaw Pact countries to adopt a common foreign policy, aimed primarily at influencing public opinion in the north. To this end, Soviet instructions to representatives of communist and workers' parties rehashed the old 'popular front' policies of the prewar Comintern. This was in the tradition of Lenin's policy for safeguarding the 1917 Revolution: while bourgeois governments

42 Otto Grotewohl, *Reden und Aufsätze*, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1959), 99 ff.; Wilhlem Friese, '75 Jahre Nordisches Institut der Universität Greifswald' (typescript, Greifswald, 1993).

43 Herbst et al., *So funktionierte die DDR*, 342–3.

44 Work schemas and reports for the Nordic countries, September 1955–September 1961, SAPMO, BA, DY 13 (Archiv der Liga für Völkerfreundschaft, alte Signatur Nr. 57).

45 On the USSR's policy for northern Europe see Bernd Bonwetsch, 'Sowjetische Westeuropapolitik II', in Dietrich Geyer, ed., *Osteuropa-Handbuch, Sowjetunion/Außenpolitik* II (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1976), 209 ff.; Wolfgang Höpker, *Die Ostsee ein rotes Binnenmeer? Eine politisch-strategische Studie* (Berlin etc.: Mittler, 1958); Bent Jensen, *Bjørnen og Haren — Sovietunionen og Danmark 1945–1965* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1999).

must not be neglected, an appeal must be made to the people to make their voices heard in matters of peace and war.[46] This took the socialist external information services far beyond today's definition of 'public diplomacy'.[47] In the spirit of Lenin and the Seventh International, the aim was to establish a more or less revolutionary alliance with the 'masses' to promote world revolution. But once Moscow had put the question of peace or war firmly on the agenda, external diplomacy had to be addressed not only to the masses but also to 'influential persons in the bourgeois camp', which assumed a rather different analysis of north European politics.[48]

The primary concern of the GDR's external information service was to challenge the FRG's claim to be Germany's sole representative, stressing the stability of the East German state, its people's commitment to socialism and to their own country, and their attitude towards reunification.

In 1957 the Soviets gave a decisive turn to the GDR's foreign and north European policy by recognising the country as a present and future independent socialist state. As a result, the internal disputes among the SED leadership were settled in a way favourable to Ulbricht, and the Foreign Ministry was free to concentrate entirely on the recognition question, which acquired a momentum of its own.[49]

The GDR's limited political and financial resources forced it to concentrate on crucial regions and 'key' countries, which of course included the Nordic states. It was hoped that they might initiate a breakdown of the Hallstein Doctrine which would provoke a 'chain reaction' of recognitions. The GDR targeted not only Sweden and Finland, but also the northern NATO states, whose cautious attitude towards alliances was seen as positively as the traditional solidarity of the Nordic lands.

In summer 1957, with the encouragement of the Soviet party and government delegation, Karl Mewis (1907–87), former leader of the communist exiles in Scandinavia and now SED leader for the East German coastal district, invited all the states on the Baltic to a people's congress in Rostock.[50] The government in East Berlin did not react with the anticipated enthusiasm, thinking that the idea would compete with their own existing plans. The SED central committee had set up yet another foreign policy commission responsible for 'all major questions of foreign politics, foreign trade and other foreign relations involving the GDR (except relationships between the SED and its brother parties)'. The Foreign Ministry had

46 V. I. Lenin, 'On Freedom', 26 October (8 November) 1917, in *Collected Works*, vol. 26. See also Ernest J. Salter, *Von Lenin bis Chruschtschow* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1958), 62.

47 Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World. U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 3: 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in the attempt to bring about understanding of its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies'.

48 Meeting of the Central Committee, 12 Aug. 1960, Vorpommersches Landesarchiv, Rep. 210, No. 2. On the theoretical background see Gerhard Powik, 'Zum Wirken der Ideen des VII. Weltkongresses der KI im Friedenskampf der Kommunisten der Gegenwart', in Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, ed., *Im Kampf für dauerhaften Frieden in historischen Fortschritt*, Themat. Inf. u. Dok., H. 54, Reihe B (Berlin, 1986), 63 ff.

49 Michael Lemke, *Die Außenbeziehungen der DDR (1949–1966)*, in Pfeil, ed., *Die DDR und der Westen*, 78.

50 *Ostsee Zeitung*, 12 Aug. 1957.

a 'Baltic Committee' to supervise future relations with northern Europe and discuss them with the USSR foreign ministry. Collaboration with Poland and Finland was also envisaged. In view of the FRG's ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, a major objective of GDR foreign policy was to develop a common front with the Nordic states 'against preparations for war in the Baltic by NATO and particularly by West Germany'. The beginnings of a practicable Baltic policy built on earlier strategic studies and included advice from union and parliamentary delegates from all the states in the region, an 'Association of Baltic towns', meetings of 'Baltic youth' and, on the political level, the creation of a treaty-based common marine weather forecasting and sea rescue service, agreements covering research and fisheries, and co-operative air traffic control. The intention was as far as possible to prevent the Nordic countries from becoming integrated with Western Europe, which to Moscow meant chiefly the Western military alliance. The GDR was expected to contribute economically to these endeavours by reducing tariffs on transit vehicles and ferries and by increasing trade with Denmark and Sweden. As it turned out, the GDR simply did not have the economic power to do this.[51]

The programme for the GDR's future northern Europe policy was set out in a government communiqué on 2 September 1957. Proclaiming that 'the Baltic must be a sea of freedom and not a locus of tension in the Cold War which might become an atomic battlefield', it called on all states in the region to turn the sea into 'a secure link between neighbouring states' and to exploit it to the full for peaceful ends. Suggestions were made for economic, transport and cultural links and for pledges of mutual non-aggression.[52] The idea of harmonising foreign policies was quietly dropped in view of the Polish struggle for emancipation. This gave the GDR more leeway, which was to enlarge considerably its room for manoeuvre on the international stage.

One important communication channel with northern Europe took the form of the annual 'Baltic week' (*Ostseewoche*) held in Rostock from 1958 to 1975 with the unchanging slogan, 'The Baltic must become a sea of freedom'.[53] Mewis, as SED party leader for the coastal district, strove to elevate this festival to the point where it was a convincing challenge to the 'Kieler Woche': not just a regional event but one of the GDR's biggest foreign policy initiatives. Publicity for the *Ostseewoche* stressed modernity; the focus was on the GDR's status as an established state with a fully committed population. In view of the current situation there was much stress on working together – 'unity from below'. This was clearly demonstrated by numerous events directed at various professional or social groups such as women, young people, teachers, peasants and so on. Tourism was strongly promoted from the start. In the 1960s increasing numbers of Party and trade union representatives also came to Rostock from northern Europe and were given the impression of the GDR as a

51 For quotations in this paragraph and generally see minutes of meetings of the Baltic Committee 1956/1957, MfAA, A 93.

52 Declaration by the government of the GDR to all Baltic states, 2 Sept. 1957, in Dok AP, vol. 5, 139 ff.

53 Linderoth, *Kampen för erkännande*, 236–93.

socially and politically progressive state. When they got home they not infrequently spread the recognition message at local and provincial level. The population along the East German coast was prepared for the festivals at training events, while books and magazine articles on the history, culture and politics of the participating Nordic states proliferated in the GDR.

The GDR's calls for diplomatic recognition grew ever more strident. At least in the early years, however, it was prepared to compromise. Ulbricht never tired of stressing the country's willingness to give and take.[54] Until the Wall went up in 1961 East German economists and students of local politics had opportunities to travel to Scandinavia, bringing back a certain amount of Scandinavian know-how to the GDR.[55] Technical contacts with Scandinavia developed fairly smoothly, the GDR having successfully made up for the lack of political contacts by creating 'functional' ones.[56] This involved elevating GDR negotiators to ministerial status vis-à-vis the minor government officials deputed by the other side – an approach later to be used in contacts between the two Germanys. Since August 1956 the German State Railways had had an office in Stockholm, followed in February 1960 by a 'GDR Transport Office'. Swedish Railways reciprocated in May 1960 by setting up an information office in the Ostbahnhof in East Berlin, and in August a joint 'GDR–Sweden Transport Office' made its appearance. Between 1953 and 1957 the 'Chamber of Foreign Trade', created in 1952 under the auspices of the Ministry for Foreign and Intra-German Trade, opened trading agencies or chambers in Helsinki, Oslo, Reykjavik, Copenhagen and Stockholm. The political activities of these offices were limited to holding receptions on the GDR's national day – except in Finland, where the office effectively assumed the functions of an embassy.

SED leaders began to travel more widely in the cause of vivifying international relations. With the support of the north European communists meetings took place at ever higher levels, indeed the highest: in 1959 Karl Mewis was received by the Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander (1901–85), and in June from the acting Danish Prime Minister Viggo Kampmann (1910–76) and his Minister for Justice. Friedrich Ebert (1894–1979), a member of the SED's politburo and mayor of East Berlin, delivered lectures at the universities of Stockholm, Uppsala and Lund at the invitation of the student union Clarté and was also invited to meet Erlander.[57]

Until the 1960s, at least, the Nordic communist parties played a decisive role in establishing contacts in northern Europe. Important matters were debated at regular meetings around and during the *Ostseewochen*. The SED was always anxious to maintain harmony among its Nordic brother parties, and its efforts in this direction

54 E.g. at the *Ostseewochen* in 1958 and 1959. See *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, vol. III/4 (1958) (Bonn, 1969), 1356 ff. and vol. IV/2 (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), 779–80. (1959 is also in Dok AP, vol. 7.)

55 Scholz, *Skandinavische Erfahrungen*, 191 ff.

56 Eymelt, *Die Tätigkeit der DDR*, II, 17.

57 For Mewis's evaluation of this trip, 21 March 1959, see SAPMO, BA, DY 30/IV 2/20/300; his account of the trip is in the Vorpommersches Landesarchiv, Bezirksparteiarchiv Rostock (BPA), IV 2/18/1430. For Ebert's visit to Sweden see MfAA, A 7684.

were not unsuccessful. In 1949 it had refrained from intervening decisively in the internal disputes dividing the Norwegian parties, although it was clear where the SED's sympathies lay.[58] A decade later, in 1957, things took a different turn. When the Danish Communists plunged into a lengthy internal struggle over Stalinism, and the anti-Stalinists who rallied around the party leader Aksel Larsen (1897–1972) began to take a sceptical view of the USSR's Baltic policy (and the GDR's north European one) and refused to give unqualified support to the *Ostseewochen* in Rostock, the SED used all the resources at its disposal to influence the outcome of the conflict, precipitating a split and offering moral and material support to its preferred faction.[59] In Norway, where the local communists were of minimal importance, the SED took a keen interest in the internal conflicts of the Norwegian Workers' Party (DNA) – conflicts arising in part from the prospective deployment of FRG armed forces in Norway. When a split threatened to develop in the late 1950s, the SED promptly offered its support to the newly formed socialist 'Left' party, which toed the Moscow line more closely.[60] Neither intervention attained the desired result, however. The Danish Communist Party, faithful to the GDR line, dwindled into insignificance, while in Norway the German overtures failed in the teeth of government suspicion and a shortage of common interests.

In 1959 the GDR's Foreign Ministry set up a separate department for northern Europe, the 'Europe Department 4', with a section for each of the Nordic countries. This structure remained unchanged until 1966.[61] The first departmental head, Herbert Krolikowski (b. 1924), made a series of proposals for the GDR's northern Europe policy.[62]

Annual statements at the *Ostseewochen* merely reiterated former expositions of the GDR's foreign policy, well larded with ferocious attacks on the FRG. The springs of innovation vis-à-vis northern Europe had run dry. East German propaganda, which *faute de mieux* was targeted chiefly at the working class, concentrated on special relationships and cultural traditions. The East Germans also kept an eye on propaganda disseminated by the FRG. They worked hard at creating 'cultural centres' and 'information bureaux' in target countries. The first cultural institute was opened in 1960 in Helsinki; a number of smaller centres followed throughout Finland. Stockholm was not endowed with a cultural centre until 1967. Both institutions addressed the widest possible public and provided quite general information about the GDR. They worked closely with the friendship societies, which mainly targeted

58 Scholz, 'Ackermann und die Furubotn-Affäre'.

59 Michael F. Scholz, 'Den danske 'revisionisme' og SED i 1950'erne', *Årbog for Arbejderbevægelsens Historie* (1991), 165–88.

60 Michael F. Scholz, 'DDR og venstresida i Norge. Tysklands Sosialistiske Enhetsparti, Orienteringkretsen og stiftelsen av SF', *Arbeiderhistorie. Årbok for Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek*, 91 (1991), 190–203.

61 Muth, *DDR-Außenpolitik*, 118 ff.

62 Herbert Krolikowski, 'Die Außenpolitik der DDR gegenüber den nordischen Staaten', *Wiss. Z. der EMAU, Gesellsch. u. sprachw. Reihe* 2/3 (1959/60); idem, 'Die Außenpolitik der DDR und ihre Beziehungen zu den nordeuropäischen Staaten', *Nordeuropa. Jahrbuch für Nordische Studien*, 1 (Greifswald, 1966), 75–84.

the educated bourgeoisie. All GDR delegations in northern Europe strove to create and strengthen contacts in all areas of politics, the economy, culture and sport. By 'creating new facts of practical co-operation' among East German and Nordic institutes and individuals, the GDR succeeded to a considerable extent in normalising international relationships, although political recognition remained firmly over the horizon.

Nordic policy becomes routine: the 1960s

In the 1960s, as the Warsaw Pact approached military and strategic parity with NATO, internal relations began to stabilise. While the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 had a negative emotional impact, in practical terms it increased the GDR's international prestige. The question of recognition became a matter of direct government policy in the West. Rather than refusing it in principle, the question became how far to go. The East Germans felt that this vindicated their previous foreign policy. In propaganda directed at northern Europe the SED strove to propagate its current Germany policy while striving to paralyse the FRG's cultural and political initiatives in the north. The GDR's Foreign Ministry hungrily gathered information about political relationships in the region in order to refine its search for potential allies.

The build-up of West German military forces in the Baltic region was perceived by both Moscow and East Berlin as a direct threat. The constitution of an allied Danish–German command (Allied Command Baltic Approaches or BALTAP) aroused fears of a West-German-led NATO invasion. Hence propaganda efforts switched to undermining NATO and discrediting the FRG in Scandinavia. The GDR pointed to the fact that the several of the personnel responsible for the 'Weser Exercise' (*Operation Weserübung)* – the German invasion of Norway in April 1940 – now held senior NATO commands as evidence of a creeping West German occupation of Scandinavia,[63] which was contrasted with the picture of a peace-loving GDR. This not only improved the GDR's image but also encouraged local pacifists and peace groups in northern Europe.[64] This conciliatory impression was of course deceptive. Even before the founding of the Warsaw Pact the GDR armed forces had had certain responsibilities vis-à-vis Denmark. In the 1960s its navy had participated in exercises for a blockade of the Baltic Sound and the Belt, using a surprise tactic strikingly similar to the German invasion of Norway in 1940. Troops were to be transported using the Warnemünde–Gedser ferry, and the invaders would have access to tactical nuclear weapons.[65]

The sixth SED Congress in January 1963 took a positive view of the situation in northern Europe. Relations with Finland had been consolidated, and trade, travel

63 See, e.g., Komitee Ostseewoche anlässlich der Ostseewoche 1960, ed., *Haie in der Ostsee. Dokumentation zur aggressiven Politik des deutschen Militarismus im Ostseeraum* (Rostock: Komitee Ostseewoche, 1960).

64 Friis, *Den nye nabo*, 117.

65 Carl-Axel Gemzell, 'Warszawapakten, DDR och Danmark. Kampen för en maritim Operationsplan', *Historisk tidskrift* 1 (1996), 32–83, esp. 72 ff.

and cultural links with Sweden had increased. The Congress emphasised that it was high time for neutral countries such as Sweden, Austria and Switzerland to put their money where their mouths were and establish normal relations with the GDR.[66] In accordance with Moscow's current attitude, the GDR stressed its affinities with northern Europe and mitigated its anti-FRG polemic to enable wider dialogue with the north.[67] The organisers of the *Ostseewoche* took full advantage of this more relaxed atmosphere.

In the 1960s the shift of power in Moscow again restricted the GDR's room for manoeuvre. Its policy towards Germany and the world at large increasingly depended on the current relations between the USSR and the Federal Republic. The contacts between the two Germanys during the West German Grand Coalition of 1966–9 proved unsatisfactory for the GDR, despite some concessions. The SED leaders were worried that any relaxation of tension between the two Germanys might lead to an 'ideological softening' of their own population. Ulbricht countered with stricter 'demarcation' and abandoned his pan-Germanic ambitions. At this stage the FRG made some modifications to the Hallstein Doctrine. In 1967 West Germany normalised relations with Romania and Yugoslavia, and other socialist states began to show an interest in economic co-operation; the GDR responded with a demand that socialist states should not forge any diplomatic links with the FRG until the latter had recognised the GDR. East Germany's 'brother countries' went along with this 'Ulbricht Doctrine' most unwillingly,[68] but the USSR strongly supported it and made recognition of the GDR a sine qua non for a European Security Conference and the construction of a collective security system, as the Bucharest Protocol of the Warsaw Pact's Political Advisory Committee had proposed in July 1966.[69] No such conference could be held unless both German states attended and were accorded equal status.

From the mid-1960s a lengthening procession of Western politicians accepted invitations to discussions in the GDR. The *Ostseewochen* engendered regular conferences with ever more important parliamentarians, producing an ever greater impression in the socialist Baltic countries. The GDR also used its friendship societies to further its efforts for worldwide recognition. In June 1968 an international conference of the societies in Helsinki proposed the constitution of a committee to co-ordinate these efforts. Many of those who favoured recognition reacted with consternation to the GDR's contribution to crushing the 'Prague Spring' in August 1968, but by February 1969 a general lowering of international tension permitted the founding of an International Standing Committee for the Recognition of the GDR. The founding meeting in Helsinki elected as chairman the president of the Swedish

66 *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VI. Parteitages der SED*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Dietz, 1963), 43.

67 In June 1963 the Soviets declared that 'they appreciated the Swedish policy of neutrality and that they were of the opinion that it made an important contribution to peace and stability in northern Europe'. *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy* (1964), 173.

68 Jochen Staadt, *Die geheime Westpolitik der SED 1960–1970. Von der gesamtdeutschen Orientierung zur sozialistischen Nation* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1993), 230 ff.

69 *Archiv der Gegenwart* 36 (1966), 12593–4.

Friendship Society, the former social democrat MP Stellan Arvidson (1902–97), with among his deputies Olavi Saarinen, deputy chairman of the Social Democrat Union of Workers and Peasants. National committees sprang up in all the Nordic states, co-ordinated by the chairman of the Danish committee, Viggo Kampmann. From spring 1970 onwards the International Committee arranged carefully timed demonstrations in over forty countries.[70] Recognition of the GDR shot to the top of the parliamentary agenda all over northern Europe.[71]

The GDR's efforts were hampered by the Western allies' visa policy, which required GDR citizens to obtain a 'temporary travel document' from an Allied office in West Berlin. In early 1969 all three Scandinavian NATO members called for this system to be scrapped and refused to implement it any longer.[72] This enabled the GDR to hold a number of preparatory meetings for the *Ostseewochen* in northern Europe.

The formation of a left–liberal coalition in Bonn in 1969 marked a turning point in the GDR's international status,[73] although the Western democracies rallied unanimously to Bonn's call to postpone recognition until the German–German negotiations had reached a successful conclusion.

Efforts to gain support from the Nordic political elites for recognition and for the holding of an international conference meant a lot of important work for the so-called Disinformation Department of the GDR Ministry of State Security – the secret intelligence service – which was consolidated and expanded accordingly. 'Department X' was set up to disseminate disinformation and to organise 'politically active measures' – meaning specific acts of deception, explanation and manipulation of the Western media. The Department saw to the launching of carefully edited materials, explored methods of publication and supported manipulators of opinion, all in the cause of influencing the northern European media in the direction most favourable to the foreign policy of the GDR and USSR. The Department prepared archive materials and information that had been carefully selected – and not infrequently falsified or garbled. Articles and book reviews appeared in leading newspapers and special book publication projects were initiated. For example, in around 1970 'Operation Hurricane' aimed to disseminate in Scandinavia publications detailing the close collaboration between Hitler's Germany and certain influential circles in Swedish society. Potential parallels with Sweden's secret – but much-discussed – collaboration with the United States and NATO served to undermine Swedish neutrality and bring Sweden into line with Moscow's calls for

70 Jürgen Pfeiler, 'Die Anerkennungsbewegung. Zum Wirken der Freundschaftsgesellschaften und Anerkennungskomitees für die DDR in nichtsozialistischen Ländern 1969–1972', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1(1988), 13–22.

71 On Sweden see Ann-Marie Ekengren, *Av hänsyn till folkrätten?: svensk erkännandepolitik 1945–1995* (Stockholm: Nerenius & Santérus, 1999).

72 *Archiv der Gegenwart* 1969, 147–8.

73 Cf. Marianne Howarth, 'Die Westpolitik der DDR (1966–1989)', in Pfeil, ed., *Die DDR und der Westen*.

a security conference. An experienced former Scandinavian émigré, Kurt Vieweg (1911–1976), stood by to offer advice and help develop this initiative.[74]

Ulbricht, whose word as head of both government and the Party was law in the 1960s, was unrelenting in his efforts to win recognition from the FRG. When this attitude threatened to hamper the relaxation of international tension, at the turn of 1970–1, Moscow gave the word for a transfer of power. The new SED leader, Erich Honecker (1912–94), was more willing to toe the Moscow line. The signing of the Four Power Agreement on 3 September 1971 removed the last impediment to the German–German negotiations, and 21 December 1972 saw the signature of a 'Treaty on the bases of relationships between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic'.[75] This basic treaty defined bilateral attitudes to key political and legal matters and marked the end of the Hallstein Doctrine. It was the first real success of the GDR's foreign policy. In December 1972 the GDR commenced diplomatic relations with twenty states, including Sweden and Finland. In January 1973 Norway and Denmark were among the first NATO states to recognise the GDR.

74 Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung. Wie die Stasi Politik im Westen machte* (Hamburg: Carlsen, 1992), 200 ff.; IM-Akte Vieweg, Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR (BStU), Zentralarchiv (ZA), AIM 1 200/77; Michael F. Scholz, *Bauernopfer der deutschen Frage. Der Kommunist Kurt Vieweg im Dschungel der Geheimdienste* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1997), 223–4.

75 Detlef Nakath, 'Wandel durch Annäherung. Der Grundlagenvertrag und seine Bedeutung für die deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen', *Deutschlandarchiv*, 6 (2002), 943–54.