



# Peaceful Coexistence?

Soviet Union and Sweden in the Khrushchev Era

Edited by Helene Carlbäck,  
Alexey Komarov,  
Karl Molin

Centre for Baltic and East European Studies  
Institute for Universal History (Moscow)

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# Introduction

## Peaceful Coexistence? Soviet Union and Sweden in the Khrushchev Era

*Helene Carlbäck, Karl Molin*

Forty-five years ago Nikita Khrushchev visited Sweden. Also, forty-five years ago the epoch in Soviet history that is connected with his name ended. This book has its origin in contributions to a conference in 2004 called the 'Peaceful co-existence? Relations between the USSR and Sweden during the Khrushchev era 1953 – 1964'. The aim of the conference was to present research endeavours undertaken in the field of Soviet foreign policy and relations with the world in the 1990's and the 2000's when critical archival documents on Soviet history were made accessible for the scholarly world both inside and outside Russia. Furthermore, the aims of the conference were to discuss central lines of Soviet and Swedish foreign policy and the main events in Soviet-Swedish relations in the years of Khrushchev regime.

### **The Soviet Union in Swedish politics in the Khrushchev Era**

When the Second World War ended the Soviet Union had replaced Germany as Sweden's 'Great Power' neighbour. Since its inception Swedes had regarded the Soviet state as a potential threat, a new manifestation of the Russian bear that had been Sweden's arch enemy since the 17th century. But the Red Army's bravery in defeating Hitler's Germany paved the road for a new attitude. For a few years in the mid-forties the Soviet Union was hailed as Europe's liberator and even conservative newspapers praised the country's economical and technical progress. In hopes that the anti-Hitler war coalition would live on and form the basis of a future international peace order, Swedish political observers envisaged a convergence between east and west, communism and democracy.

The Social Democrat government that was formed in the summer of 1945 viewed the promotion of good relations with the Soviet Union as

one of its most important tasks. In Sweden, as in Norway, there were ideas of a bridge-building policy and thus the Swedish government entertained hopes of being able to help smoothing out frictions between the great powers. But when the rift between the Great Powers widened, bridge-building ambitions became obsolete. Under the impact of Eastern Europe's sovietization, anti-Russian sentiments were revived and reached full strength in the beginning of the 1950's. The danger of Soviet infiltration in Swedish society was depicted in glaring colours and the domestic Communist Party was castigated by the press and meticulously supervised by the Security Police.

The perceived Soviet threat made a deep mark on Swedish politics. All parties agreed that national defence had to be reinforced. An extensive military rearmament was accomplished and by the mid 1950's Sweden's defence costs were, on a per capita basis, one of the highest in the world. Soon after Stalin's death, however, the Swedish foreign policy establishment observed the conciliatory signals issued from the new leadership in the Kremlin. Consequently, the Foreign Office carefully noted Prime Minister Malenkov's statement, made at Stalin's funeral, that there were no conflicts between the superpowers that could not be settled by peaceful means. People were amazed when Deputy Foreign Minister Gromyko unexpectedly stopped over in Stockholm in March 1953 to pay a courtesy visit to Swedish Foreign Minister Undén. The new sociable and accessible style adopted by Soviet diplomats was noted with satisfaction.

Yet, Swedish politicians demonstrated different their reactions to the new signals, depending on the political group to which they belonged. The conservatives and liberals were more inclined to adopt a sceptical attitude. Soviet friendliness, they argued, was part of a sly scheme to make the West lower its guard. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, stated that the new signals did not give cause for slowing down the military build-up, but they should be listened to with attention and seriousness. Any opportunity to improve the international atmosphere and make the world safer should be taken.

This new accessibility displayed by the Soviets resulted in an increased exchange of formal and informal visits. In the summer of 1954 Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén went for a private vacation to Moscow. At a dinner party he met Soviet Deputy Prime Minister

Anastas Mikoyan who spelled out the philosophy of peaceful co-existence. 'There is no reason for the Swedes to fear the Russians', Mikoyan told Undén. 'Why should we violate Sweden's independence? Each of us can stick to his ways of thinking. We have our communism. You can go on with your party struggles as much as you like.'

Two years later, in 1956, Prime Minister Tage Erlander headed a Swedish government delegation for an official visit to the Soviet Union. In a communiqué issued at the conclusion of the visit both parties emphasised their interest in trying to 'contribute to further international relaxation and development of peaceful cooperation between all peoples on the basis of the principles provided by the United Nation's Charter'.

There were, however, issues on which no mutual understanding was possible. One of those was the so-called Catalina-affair. In June 1952 a Swedish aircraft of the DC 3 type on a reconnaissance mission had been shot down by the Soviets. Eight servicemen were killed. Also a Catalina aircraft searching for the disappeared plane was shot down. This time the crew was saved. The incident was brought up during the discussions in Moscow but the topic was dropped after both parties had stated its points of view.

The most important source of irritation, however, was the so-called Wallenberg affair. In 1944 Swedish businessman Raoul Wallenberg had been assigned to the Swedish embassy in Budapest with the task of assisting Jews escape extermination. In January 1945 Wallenberg was detained by Soviet military forces and since then no one had heard of him. According to a Soviet government statement in August 1947 Wallenberg was 'not to be found in the Soviet Union'; he was 'unknown' to Soviet officials. This affair was a sensitive and intricate issue to the Swedish Government not least because it was constantly being accused by the opposition parties of passivity and indulgence. During the discussions in Moscow the Swedish Prime Minister brought up the Wallenberg question again. The Russians let the Swedes know how deeply annoyed they were by this most untimely issue being brought up, but at the end they agreed to having the issue investigated once more. This commitment was included in the final communiqué. In the eyes of the Swedish public opinion this was probably the most important outcome of the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union.

The Swedish action did yield a change in the Soviet attitude. In 1957 the Swedish Government was informed that Wallenberg actually had been detained in a Soviet prison, but unfortunately he had passed away in 1947. However, the Soviet answer did not put an end to the Wallenberg case. New witnesses appeared with information on mystical Swedes in Soviet prison cells. The affair continued to burden Swedish – Soviet relations, even today the official Swedish position is that the case is not closed.

As a result of the military intervention in Hungary in the autumn of 1956 the Soviet Union lost most of the goodwill they might have gained. Sceptics of *détente* claimed they had been right all along. The fact that the reason for the Soviet intervention was the Hungarian decision to leave the Warsaw Pact and take up a neutral position was, of course, especially revolting from a Swedish point of view. The Hungarian decision did not, Prime Minister Erlander explained, imply a danger that had to be averted. On the contrary, he argued, a neutral Hungary would have been ‘a bulwark of peace’. Foreign Minister Undén agreed: a neutral Hungary would have been ‘a security factor in Europe’.

The Swedish reaction to the Soviet assault on Hungary was stiff in tone but short in duration. A long time isolation of the Soviet Union would not, the Swedish Foreign Office reasoned, be in the interest of peace and *détente*. But at what point could the exchange of visits be resumed? During his stay in Moscow in 1956 Erlander had invited Khrushchev to visit Sweden. The idea was that the Soviet Secretary General should make a round trip to the three Scandinavian capitals. In the autumn of 1958 the Swedish government, in agreement with its Norwegian and Danish counterparts, informed the public that a Soviet visit to the Scandinavian capitals would take place the following summer.

The public reaction on this decision demonstrated that relations with the Soviet Union were a highly controversial issue still. The leader of the Conservative Party declared that he was against the visit and leading liberal and conservative newspapers demanded that the visit be cancelled. Protest marches and demonstrations were arranged. The opponents argued that a visit would blur the borderline between democracy and dictatorship. The outcome was a lucky one from the opponents’ point of view. On July 19 the Soviet Foreign Ministry declared that

Khrushchev had called off the visit because of the anti-Soviet manifestations. A few days later it became known that Khrushchev had accepted an invitation to the USA, which, in all likelihood, was a stronger reason for his declining the visit to Scandinavia. It wasn't until the summer of 1964 before Khrushchev's Scandinavian trip was realised. A few months later he was forced into retirement.

Khrushchev's standing in Swedish opinion did not improve after the heated debate on his Scandinavian trip. He was seen as highly responsible for a number of ominous international crises e.g. Berlin 1959, Congo 1960–61, Cuba 1962. From a Swedish point of view two crises, which involved Finland, were especially disquieting. In history books they are referred to as the Night Frost of 1959 and the Note Crisis of 1961.

Unlike other border states Finland had escaped sovietization and communist take-over. It claimed neutrality in relation to the Great Power blocs but maintaining good relations with the Soviets was a keystone of its foreign policy. A decisive aspect in the two Finnish incidents was Soviet reaction to what they perceived as anti-Soviet elements in Finnish politics. Thus, during the Night Frost they displayed their displeasure by calling home the Soviet ambassador to Helsinki and calling off trade negotiations. During the Note Crisis, a much more serious and multifaceted incident, they even demanded military consultations with the Finns.

The question asked in Western capitals was if and how Finland could be helped. The Swedish answer was that the ability of the Finns must be trusted to know how to handle their Soviet relations. Intervention from the West would only aggravate their position. 'The best help we can give Finland', Prime Minister Erlander said during the Note-crisis '...is to do nothing that can be perceived as wavering or doubtfulness regarding our policy of neutrality.' Thus, Sweden's contribution to stability and peace in Northern Europe was to abide by its chosen line of policy. Now, was this really the most effective policy? Would the Finns not be better off if Sweden declared it would reconsider its policy of non-alignment in the case that the Soviet Union would not respect Finland's independence? Actually, in a statement of November 1961 Prime Minister Erlander did actually connect Soviet conduct towards Finland with Swedish non-alignment. Without actu-



ally saying it, he conveyed the message that if Soviet meddled too deeply into Finland's affairs NATO's border might be moved eastwards.

Still, the main line in the Swedish attitude during the crises was to stay in the background and let the Finns handle the situations as they thought best. Both crises were solved by domestic measures that closed the way for the so-called anti-soviet forces in Finnish politics. No one could deny that these measures implied restrictions on the country's democracy and sovereignty. But, if the Finns found them necessary and inescapable, the Swedes were not going to raise objections.

To conclude this overview on the Soviet Union in Swedish politics, it is obvious that Swedish politicians were not unimpressed by the changes in the Communist world after Stalin's death. True, Khrushchev had blood on his hands as well, but the reign of terror had softened. Domestic liberalisation was accompanied by a policy of *détente* that raised expectations. And so did the clear awareness of the new Communist Party leader that mankind was under the threat of extinction in the nuclear age.

The anxiously observing smaller neighbour Sweden received the new signals with a guarded optimism, nourished by concessions like the agreement on the Austrian State Treaty in 1955 and the retreat from the Finnish naval base of Porkkala the same year. But most of the optimism vanished for good after the intervention in Hungary. What the Swedish foreign policy establishment had hoped for was Soviet accessibility and stability. What they to an increasing degree perceived was unpredictability and adventurism. A note in Foreign Minister Undén's diary is telling. On the eve of his departure to the UN session in New York in September 1960 he wrote: 'I am not all looking forward to this trip. Khrushchev is shouting and swearing and rumbling, and you can never tell what he is aiming at.' One might guess that the first reaction to the retirement of the Secretary General was a sigh of relief.

## The content of the book

For the past 50 odd years scholarly books and articles, biographical works, essays and journalistic products on Nikita Khrushchev have been issued. Up until the early 1990s this took place primarily outside of the Soviet Union. In the earlier stages Khrushchev had become a kind of a hero to the Western world, especially after he was ousted from power in 1964. His efforts to de-Stalinize the Soviet state and society have been favorably compared against both Stalin's dictatorial and terror based regime as well as the perceived re-Stalinizing policies during the post-Khrushchev regime.

Soviet historiography, however, did not provide Nikita Khrushchev with the same positive judgments; as a matter of fact relatively little was written about him at all. This is not really surprising considering that history writing to a large extent was controlled by the same regime that had expelled him from the position as the country's leader. However, the post-1991 period in Russia witnessed a renewed interest in the Khrushchev period; a number of publications saw the light of day. Also among Western historians there was a fresh interest in revisiting the decade after Stalin's death, the result of which American historian William Taubman's monumental biography 'Khrushchev. The man and his era' is a fine example.<sup>1</sup> Some works were produced as the result of a cooperative venture between Russian and Western authors.<sup>2</sup> Very recently, a collection of articles was published covering various political, economical and cultural aspects of the Khrushchev period.<sup>3</sup>

In this book eight specialists have contributed with their analyses on Soviet and Swedish international relations and foreign policy during the Cold War era. The first three chapters (Pechatnov, Egorova, Filitov) are devoted to Soviet foreign policy in the Khrushchev years with reference to a wider European context. In the following two chapters (Korobochkin, Komarov) the scope has narrowed down to Soviet-Swedish relations viewed from the Soviet part, while chapters six and seven (Molin, Wahlbäck) analyse the relations between the two coun-

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<sup>1</sup> W. Taubman, *Khrushchev. The man and his era*, London: Free Press, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> W. Taubman, S. Khrushchev and A. Gleason (eds), *Nikita Khrushchev*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> W. Taubman, S. Khrushchev and A. Gleason (eds), *Nikita Khrushchev*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

tries primarily from the Swedish angle. Finally, in chapter eight we find an introduction to collections of Soviet archival documents of key importance to scholars in the field of Soviet international relations and foreign policies.

Vladimir Pechatnov, the author of 'Reflections on Soviet foreign policy, 1953–1964' claims that the twelve years period starting with Stalin's death and ending with Khrushchev's ousting from power was a most contradictory period when Soviet foreign policy was pioneering and reckless, peaceful and bellicose, grandiose and ridiculous all at the same time. Nevertheless, Pechatnov emphasizes the positive innovations in the Soviet foreign policies which he claims were characteristic of the Khrushchev regime. In a constructive way the Soviet political leadership tried to diminish the East-West gap so typical of the Cold War era. Khrushchev did more than just mechanically repeating the concept of 'peaceful co-existence' as a political slogan in the way Stalin did.

Natalia Egorova also stresses the pivotal role of Khrushchev and his initiatives in issuing disarmament proposal to the Western world. In 'The Soviet Disarmament Proposals and Khrushchev's armed force reduction' Egorova brings light to the Soviet policy of reductions in the armed forces during the second half of the 50's and the early 60's. In evaluating Khrushchev's leadership in international politics she also calls attention to his impulsiveness and inconsistencies as a politician, which reinforced the already contradictory character of the Soviet foreign policy on disarmament. The author sees the driving forces of Khrushchev as a mixture of ideology and pragmatism, where a reinterpretation of Marxist-Leninist theory on peaceful coexistence played an important role. It allowed for an approach that plays down the notion of inevitability of war between the socialist and the capitalist camps.

In contrast to the preceding authors, Alexei Filitov presents a more unequivocally critical evaluation of Khrushchev's role, this time with relation to Germany. 'Khrushchev and the German Question' is a case study on one of the most pertinent aspects of the Soviet Foreign relations in the first post-war decades, the issue of Germany as a united political entity. Here, the author elucidates the complex approach to the East German question from the part of the Soviet foreign policy leadership and by doing so finds contradictions within the Soviet leadership. In contrast to what can be called more conventional wisdom Filitov

finds Khrushchev to be more conservative than some of his Communist Party fellows, e.g. Vyacheslav Molotov. The author explains Khrushchev's sometimes surprisingly harsh attitudes towards the East German allies with his deep disaffection with Germans in general.

In the following two chapters, the role of Sweden in Soviet foreign policy is considered. The fact that Swedish-Soviet relations were not loaded with open disputes or dramatic conflicts, but instead appeared to consist of more or less routine day-to-day diplomatic activity, did not mean that Sweden and its policy were unimportant in Soviet eyes, Maxim Korobochkin claims. In 'Soviet views on Sweden's neutrality and foreign policy, 1945–50', he presents the reader with a well-needed background to what was to come later on. A close reading of documents emanating from the Scandinavian desk at the Soviet Ministry for foreign affairs allows one to argue that the Soviet view on the Swedish strivings for neutrality and non-alignment gradually reached a stage of greater understanding in the eyes of Soviet foreign policy establishment. Sweden's special position was taken more seriously, and its adherence to neutrality was attributed to a number of 'real reasons', such as Sweden's 130-year experience of non-belligerency. This paved way for the more substantial changes in outlook that were to come in the Khrushchev years.

In 'Khrushchev and Sweden' Alexei Komarov proceeds further and writes about the Soviet view on Swedish neutrality in the late 1950's and early 1960s. The author underlines the positive role that Sweden's neutral politics had according to the Soviet view. Despite being relatively small nations, the Scandinavian countries did play an important role in the configuration of international relations during the Cold War era, the author maintains. Their position between the opposing blocs put them in the centre of attention of both Washington and Moscow. In his study Komarov brings up Soviet-Swedish relations with specific attention to Nikita Khrushchev's visit to Sweden in 1964 and the conclusions that could be drawn from his talks to Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander

The subsequent two chapters of the book are devoted to Soviet-Swedish relations seen from the Swedish point of view. Firstly, Karl Molin presents us with the mainstream thoughts in Swedish foreign policy by the time of Khrushchev as well as with some specific charac-

teristics of the outlook on the world held by Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén. In 'Östen Undén, the Soviet Peace Offensive and the Swedish Foreign Policy Debate' the author highlights some critical moments in Swedish domestic politics with reference to the country's interactions with Soviet Union. Undén was a controversial figure in the Swedish Foreign policy debate, not the least in his policies towards Soviet Union. The author attempts to explain why this was so and he comes to the conclusion that Foreign Minister Undén and his critics, foremost from the right-wing and liberal opposition parties were situated in two different political discourses. Undén's lack of communication skills clearly revealed itself in his way of acting more like a Law professor than a politician.

Secondly, in his 'Swedish foreign policy, 1953–1964. Preliminary theses', Krister Wahlbäck gives an overview of how Khrushchev's Foreign Policy initiatives were viewed from outside of the Soviet Union, in this case by the Swedish foreign policy establishment in general, and by the 'in-house Sovietologist' Stellan Bohm in particular. Regarding security policy Sweden was in fact situated 'amidst the Northern European calmness'. From the point of view of Swedish security, the fact that its Nordic neighbours, both to the West and to the East, intended to limit the military presence of the super-powers on their territories was most important. Together with Sweden's own policy of non-alignment, this meant that the sharp line of confrontation on the European continent did not extend northwards into the Nordic region. At the time, the Swedish decision-makers were certainly less confident, less inclined to look upon the position of Sweden and her neighbours in this optimistic light. Rather they were worried that something might happen that could upset what later would be labelled the 'Nordic Balance'. In his study Wahlbäck points to two decisions that Khrushchev made of importance for the Nordic system. First, he returned the Soviet military base in Porkkala, and secondly, he accepted the 'neutrality' label on Finnish foreign policy.

Finally, Mikhail Prozumenshchikov introduces one of the key archival institutions containing documents of the Cold War period. Although RGANI, Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (*Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii*) mainly stores documents emanating from the Communist Party, its collections nevertheless play an

extremely important role in the search for many parts of the Soviet past. This is so, since the history of the Soviet state is inseparable from that of the Communist Party, emerging as the main player on the country's political scene in the 20th century. When it comes to the conduct of foreign policies and international relations the Soviet state and party system was truly intertwined. The world regarded Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev and their successors primarily as heads of state and only secondly as leaders of the ruling party. Thus, the Communist Party leaders, when making official visits abroad (outside of the Socialist camp) represented themselves as great power leaders, not specifically emphasizing their party affiliation. In his presentation Prozumenshchikov brings up the question that often is being raised about the reliability of the Soviet archival documents. His argument goes in the direction that in fact the information was, to a certain extent unbiased, since those who compiled the papers never had to worry that people outside the highest echelons of the party would have a chance to read them and evaluated their content. Party and state officials were absolutely sure that party archives would never, even after Communism's worldwide triumph, be opened for the public, and published memoirs by party leaders were at the time unthinkable.



# Chapter 1

## Reflections on Soviet Foreign Policy, 1953–1964

*Vladimir Pechatnov*

For the Soviet Union, the years 1953 to 1964 were a remarkable period of rapid change and innovations in foreign policy. The period was sandwiched between two eras of relative stability and certainty, i.e. the Cold War years of the Stalin era and the Brezhnev era's years of stable East-West relations. These twelve years were also a time when breakthroughs in peaceful coexistence were interspersed with the most dangerous crises of the Cold War era. Never before or since has Soviet foreign policy, at one and the same time, been so innovative and so reckless, peaceful and bellicose, grandiose and ridiculous. Some of us lived through this period, but only now are we beginning to really comprehend it, as new documents from the Russian archives gradually become available. The period was intimately associated with Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev's colourful personality.

### **Bridging the East-West gap**

During the first post-Stalin years, Khrushchev was still in the process of making his way to the very top – from being just one member of the ruling group, which also comprised Georgii Malenkov, Nikolai Bulganin and Vyacheslav Molotov. These people differed with respect to their political agendas and ambitions, but where foreign policy was concerned, there was a sort of consensus among them, i.e. they agreed on what needed to be done immediately after the death of Stalin. The great dictator had left them with a huge empire, but the Soviet Union had become a garrison state, isolated from the rest of the world. Its economy had become heavily militarised, the people was exhausted and Cold War tensions were running extremely high. Relations with non-Communist countries were reduced to the bare minimum and Moscow had no positive foreign policy toward them. So the first task was relatively obvious:



to put an end to the domestic and external excesses that had characterised Stalin's rule, to normalise national priorities, to reduce international tension and to break away from the Soviet Union's largely self-imposed isolation in order to become a more active player on the world stage. More specifically, as recalled by one veteran of the Soviet diplomat corps, this policy had three fundamental elements: 'To strengthen and consolidate the people's democracies, Eastern and Central Europe behind the Soviet Union; to create, wherever possible, a neutral 'layer' between the two opposing military-political blocs; and to gradually develop economic and normalised, peaceful cooperation with NATO members'.<sup>1</sup> In short, this first period may be called *détente* by accommodation.

The first thing to do was to make up for Stalin's most obvious foreign policy blunders, which had grown in number during the last years of his rule. Already by the summer of 1953, the new Soviet government normalized its relations with Turkey, renouncing its previous territorial claims on the Straits; relations with the Soviet Union's other southern neighbour, Iran, were also repaired, after the hardball pressure and hostility of the Stalin's years; full diplomatic relations were restored with Israel after the break of 1953; and fences were mended with Yugoslavia, even if the famous Stalin-Tito split of the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Soviet propaganda usually described Tito and his team as 'crazy fascist dogs', or worse, was not wholly breached. With respect to the neighbours in the North, new initiatives were also under way: the Khrushchev-Bulganin trip to Finland and the return to Finland of the Porkkala-Udd military base which, according to Khrushchev's personal memoirs, had lost its former military value and was merely poisoning relations between the USSR and Finland 'being like a knife at their throat'.<sup>2</sup> New trade agreements were signed with Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

In Asia, one of the new leadership's first foreign policy steps was to speed up the cease-fire talks in Korea, which Stalin had been stalling in order to bleed America as much as possible. Now the Kremlin wanted to

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<sup>1</sup> A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva. Vospominaniya diplomata* (From Kollontai to Gorbachev. Recollections of a Diplomat), Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, *Vremya. Lyudi. Vlast'. Vospominaniya v 4 knigakh* (Time. People. Power. Reminiscences), 4 vols, Moscow: Moskovskie novosti, 1999, vol. 2, p. 266.

disengage from this prolonged conflict and diffuse the situation in the region. As a result of increased Soviet pressure on the Chinese Communists as well as on the North Koreans, the armistice agreement was signed in July, thus ending this very bloody war that Stalin had been instrumental in starting. Soviet diplomacy also played a constructive role at the 1954 Geneva conference on Indochina, where the unlikely twosome Molotov and Anthony Eden pushed for a compromise solution.<sup>3</sup> That same year, Khrushchev visited the People's Republic of China in order to get warmer relations with Mao who had been offended by Stalin's heavy-handedness; Khrushchev generously increased Soviet aid to the PRC and hastened the return of the Port-Arthur naval base.

But this period of correcting Stalin's blunders was just a beginning. It was to be followed by new initiatives in Soviet foreign policy. In 1954, in an attempt to undermine the European defence community project, the Soviet government came up with the novel concept of a European collective security system, which, for the first time, would include the United States. In a sense, this was a forerunner for the European project which would reach its culmination twenty years later. This was also the time when the Soviet government made the intriguing proposal that it join NATO – an event to which President Vladimir Putin recently referred. The true motive behind this offer was the wish to gain a propaganda advantage in case the Western powers should turn them down, or to 'explode NATO from within' if the West accepted their membership.<sup>4</sup> The Western response was, at best, lukewarm; the Federal Republic of Germany was incorporated into NATO, which in turn pushed the Kremlin into launching its own formal alliance in early 1955 – the Warsaw Treaty Organisation.

The division of the European continent was thus a fact, but the Soviet government continued its efforts to bridge the East-West gap. In May 1955, on Khrushchev's initiative and as a result of Soviet concessions, the State Treaty of Austria was signed, restoring that country's sovereignty and turning it into a neutral buffer state between the two opposing alliances. For the new leadership, these negotiations were a successful foreign policy debut that, in Khrushchev's own words, 'dem-

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<sup>3</sup> For Eden's praise of Molotov's cooperation, see: A. Eden, *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden*. London: Full Circle, 1960, pp. 116, 121.

<sup>4</sup> AVP RF, f. 06, op.13, p. 2, d. 9, l. 23.

onstrated that we can conduct complicated negotiations and do it well'.<sup>5</sup> That same summer, the Kremlin, for the first time, agreed to consider disarmament plans that involved limited on-site inspections on Soviet territory. In the autumn of that year, during Chancellor Adenauer's visit to Moscow, intense and sometimes dramatic negotiations culminated in full diplomatic relations being established between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany. That year also saw the birth of 'the Spirit of Geneva', when the Soviet leaders met their western counterparts from USA, Britain and France for the first time since World War II. Though the summit did not result in tangible results, it did, temporarily, make the Cold War less cold. Psychologically, dealing with the Western leaders face to face gave a strong moral boost to the new leadership which was extricating itself from an inferiority complex that dated back to the Stalin era when that great dictator constantly scorned them as helpless 'chickens' who, once he was gone, would be incapable of holding out against the 'imperialists'. Now, to their great relief, they discovered that they not only were able to withstand that pressure, but also that 'there was no pre-war situation and our potential adversaries were as afraid of us as we were of them'.<sup>6</sup>

Soviet policy towards the Scandinavian countries was also becoming more flexible and accommodating. A new emphasis was placed on improving bilateral relations, the former hostility towards the idea and practice of neutrality in Northern Europe began to fade away, even though the main objective of this new stance was to weaken the ties of Norway, Denmark and Ireland to NATO. Within the Soviet Foreign Ministry, a new department was established which focussed on the Scandinavian countries.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Khrushchev, *Vremya*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 222.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed review of Soviet policy towards Scandinavia in these years, see A. Komarov, 'Soviet Policy Toward Scandinavian Countries in the Khrushchev Period', in *Kholodnaya voina i politika razryadki. Diskussionnye problemy* (Cold War and the Policy of Détente: Problems and Discussions), 2 vols, Institut Vseobshchei istorii, Moscow, 2003, vol.1, pp. 91–102.

## Opening new horizons in Asia and the Arab world

While it was stabilising its western front, the Soviet collective leadership simultaneously opened new horizons in the East. Back in Stalin's era, leaders of national independence movements in Asia and the Arab world were treated like 'bourgeois nationalists', unfit for close cooperation with the socialist camp. Now the Soviet diplomacy viewed them as potential allies in the struggle against Western imperialism. The Soviet government came out in support of the emerging non-alignment movement. In November–December 1955, the Khrushchev-Bulganin grand tour of the Asian capitals paved the way for new relations with India, Indonesia, Burma and other Asian countries. India, in particular, became a major recipient of Soviet economic and technical assistance, a fact that laid the ground for long-term Indian-Soviet cooperation. In 1955–1956, peace treaty negotiations with Japan resulted in a peace agreement between the two countries and the restoration of diplomatic and consular relations. During the negotiations, and on Khrushchev's personal initiative, Moscow also agreed to consider a return of two out of the four disputed Kuriles islands to Japan, a gesture that, to this day, remains the most conciliatory Soviet-Russian stand ever taken on the issue.

The Asian breakthrough was accompanied by growing Soviet involvement in the Middle East and Arab world as a whole. The new leadership moved towards a more sophisticated understanding of Arab nationalism, while the Arab nationalists, in turn, were looking for new, non-western allies. Dimitrii Shepilov (who was soon to replace Molotov as Foreign Minister) made a preparatory trip to Egypt. This visit provided the first opening between the two countries and was followed by arms sales to Egypt through Czechoslovakia. But the real breakthrough came when the Americans refused to finance the construction of the Aswan dam and when Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal – a move that Moscow supported energetically. The Soviet Union's strong pro-Egypt position during the Suez crisis (dramatised by Khrushchev's famous 'missile note') also greatly facilitated the development of close ties with Syria and Iraq where anti-western nationalists had taken power. The USSR was turning into a serious player in the Middle East, and thus the stage was set for a protracted Soviet-American competition for influence in this strategically important region.

## A renewed ideology on foreign relations

Khrushchev, who in early 1955 pushed aside his greatest rival, Malenkov, came to dominate the new Soviet leadership, which also began to raise the iron curtain at home. Cultural and academic exchange programs with the US and other western countries were initiated; foreign tourism was developed, censorship was relaxed and a growing flow of foreign literature, music and cinema began to reach the Soviet audience, inviting some revisionist thinking and unwelcome comparisons with the Soviet reality. New research institutes dedicated to the study of the outside world began to emerge. The important turning point was reached in 1957, when the World Youth Festival in Moscow took place. For the first time in the Soviet era, this event brought many thousands of young Soviets in direct contact with youths from all over the world.<sup>8</sup>

These new departures from traditional Soviet policies had to be legitimised in the official ideology. A simple repetition of peaceful coexistence as the motto behind the new policy did not suffice – after all, Stalin himself had occasionally used this motto freely. So, at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress of 1956, Khrushchev and his colleagues not only attacked the Stalin personality cult, but undertook a massive revision of Stalin's foreign policy dogmas. According to the old orthodoxy, world wars were inevitable products of capitalism and no durable peace could be established as long as that vicious system existed. The Soviet Union itself was subjected to a hostile 'capitalist encirclement'. According to the new line, changes in the correlation of world powers meant that a major war was no longer a fatal inevitability; nor was there a capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union. Therefore, prolonged, peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world was now declared to be both a possible and desirable guideline for Soviet foreign policy. Coexistence itself was seen as something more than just a *modus vivendi*, or a mere absence of war. In Khrushchev's own words, coexistence meant that both systems 'should advance towards an improvement of relations, greater mutual trust and further cooperation'.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite these innovations, the new foreign policy doctrine retained some ortho-

<sup>8</sup> A. V. Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaia 'Ottepel'* (Khrushchev's 'Thaw'), Moscow: Olma Press, 2002, pp. 282–283.

<sup>9</sup> *XX Syez'd KPSS. Stenograficheskiĭ otchet. Tom I* (20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU. Proceedings), Moscow, 1956, vol.1, pp. 14–15.

dox elements: peaceful coexistence did not negate the class struggle. Rather, it was a 'special form' of that struggle on the world scene, and it would continue.

Khrushchev's ambitious domestic reform program was also of great importance to his foreign policy. By humanising the Soviet system, he intended to make the country more attractive to both his own people and the world at large. In contrast to Stalin, Khrushchev saw socialism's primary goal to be the provision of a superior quality of life for ordinary people. This entailed a reallocation of national resources – away from imperial needs and towards domestic improvements. Among other things, this required cuts in military expenditures, which in turn presupposed an easing of international tension. This thinking, coupled with a new belief in the overwhelming potency of nuclear weapons, led the Kremlin to put new emphasis on strategic forces, as a means of saving money on costly conventional weapons and personnel.

Far-reaching as it was, Khrushchev's revisionism was received with scepticism in the West. Western, and especially American, leaders' inability to understand and appreciate Khrushchev's policy and conceptual innovations was truly remarkable. For years, the heart of the containment strategy towards the Soviet Union had been the idea that, if contained, the Soviet regime would gradually mellow (if not disintegrate) and the Kremlin would have to modify its foreign policy. It would reject Stalin's dogma of an inevitable clash with capitalism. However, when Khrushchev did in fact modify Soviet foreign policy, his actions were interpreted as tactical manoeuvres, as a smoke screen designed to confuse and disarm the West.

Washington, in particular, refused to believe its own eyes. An illuminating example is Secretary of State John F. Dulles's talk to senator William Fulbright in December 1957, a year and a half after Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress: 'If we succeed in these objectives – that is – avoiding nuclear war, communist-inspired local conflicts and a Soviet take-over of the underdeveloped world – there would eventually be a change in the Soviet Union which would transform it into the kind of nation with whom we could have good relations in a normal international society'.<sup>10</sup> In other words, he still saw this

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<sup>10</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, vol. 24 (hereafter – FRUS), Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989, p. 188.

Soviet change as a remote possibility, not an actual reality. Even the main architect of containment, George Kennan, could not believe in the rationality of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation campaign – this 'most reckless' of the Soviet premier's initiatives.<sup>11</sup> Kennan's intricate explanation was that Khrushchev had taken part in killing Stalin and now had to exorcise his guilt by demonising the dead Master.<sup>12</sup> More perceptive in their reading of Khrushchev's foreign policy changes were the Chinese leaders: they considered it dangerous revisionism, bordering on appeasement with the imperialist enemy, and did not hide their criticism.

## Unexpected turbulence in Eastern Europe

Ironically, Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation campaign had its greatest effect on foreign Communist parties and Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe: rather than solidifying the socialist camp, it encouraged centrifugal tendencies in the form of virulent opposition to Stalin's type of rule. This happened in Hungary as well as in Poland. The Polish opposition, which was led by Communists with strong popular backing, was basically non-violent. The opposition in Hungary, however, with its openly anti-Communist and anti-Soviet agenda, left the Kremlin no choice. It had to be forcefully suppressed in order to prevent Hungary's desertion from the Soviet bloc. Faced with a double threat of losing out in both Hungary and Egypt (as both crises culminated at the same time), Khrushchev and his colleagues responded forcefully on both fronts, by suppressing the Hungarian revolt and by threatening to use force against France, Britain and Israel in the Middle East. Even so, the decision to resort to intervention in Hungary was not an easy one to make. Recently published notes from Kremlin's discussions of the crisis confirm that the party leadership shifted back and forth before finally deciding, 'There is no other choice'.<sup>13</sup>

The legacy of those events was mixed: they had demonstrated the possibility of a modest reform of Eastern Europe's Soviet-type regimes and Moscow's new willingness to compromise, but at the same time they

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<sup>11</sup> W. Taubman, *Khrushchev. The Man and His Era*. London, Free Press, 2003, p. 274.

<sup>12</sup> FRUS, 1989, pp.130–131.

<sup>13</sup> *Prezidium TsK KPSS, 1954–1964 : Tom 1: Chernovye Protokol'nye Zapisi Zasedanii.: Ste-nogrammy. Postanovleniya* (Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU: 1954–1964. Records of meetings. Decisions), 2 vols, Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003–2006, vol. 1, p. 191.

had showed the futility of openly challenging Soviet control, and of hoping for support from the West. The Kremlin's ruthlessness notwithstanding, Khrushchev handled these internal crises in the socialist bloc somewhat differently than Stalin would have done in his place: before making the final decisions, he consulted other allies (including the Chinese) whose advice, in his own words, 'we had never before required'. The need for toughness was not the only lesson he drew from this painful experience; a second lesson was that junior partners, as he put it, 'have grown out of their short pants' and should be treated more like equals and with respect. Behind closed doors, Khrushchev was now calling on his subordinates 'to rid themselves of the old sin of petty command' in the relations with 'fraternal countries'.<sup>14</sup>

## Domestic debates soon fading out

On the home front, Khrushchev's foreign policy revisionism had its critics. The old guard headed by Vyacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich began to feel that the increasingly dominant Khrushchev was going too far in his revision of orthodox creeds, in words as well as deeds. Molotov, whom Khrushchev had removed from his post as Foreign Minister in June 1956, voiced his criticism of the Austrian Treaty, the concessions to Japan and what he considered an obsession on Khrushchev's part with Soviet-American détente. Molotov also detested Khrushchev's style of personal diplomacy, which he considered undignified and detrimental to Soviet international prestige. He singled out two particular cases: Khrushchev's letter of sympathy on the occasion of President Eisenhower's heart attack and his taking a sauna with President Urho Kekkonen during the Khrushchev-Bulganin visit to Finland. Khrushchev had his loyal supporter, Anastas Mikoyan, to rebuff both accusations at the June 1957 Central Committee Plenary meeting. 'Of course,' said Mikoyan, 'one might have thought to oneself about Eisenhower: let him drop dead and go to hell. But when a person falls ill, we express sympathy; how could this diminish Communist prestige?'<sup>15</sup> As for the sauna

<sup>14</sup> 'Quotations from Khrushchev's speech to the Party leadership on November 4', 1956, *Istochnik*, 2003, No 6, pp. 65, 67.

<sup>15</sup> Molotov. Malenkov. Kaganovich. 1957. *Stenogramma iyun'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty* (Proceedings of June 1957 Plenary Meeting of CPSU Central Committee and other documents), Moscow, 1998, p. 129.



diplomacy, Mikoyan went on, 'the fact that comrade Khrushchev went to the sauna was a sign of respect towards Kekkonen, and was not done because he needed a bath and had nowhere else to take it. He risked his health by accepting Kekkonen's invitation because he realised what a rare opportunity it was – since we do not go to Finland every day, let us, to the utmost, take advantage of that opportunity to get close and improve mutual trust'.<sup>16</sup>

Khrushchev and his allies won that struggle, not so much on the merits of their policy as by outmanoeuvring their opponents behind the scenes and removing them from leadership circles. Khrushchev's personal grip on power was strengthened further when, in March 1958, he had himself appointed Prime Minister, in addition to being Party leader. Six years later, he would be attacked by his colleagues for concentrating too much power in his own hands, but at the time, they went out of their way to promote him to this new position, which, in Leonid Brezhnev's words, would not only 'immeasurably raise the authority' of the Prime Minister post, but would also bring Khrushchev's 'genius into the field of foreign policy'.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, from now on, serious policy debates at the top gradually vanished, and Khrushchev soon became a full master of Soviet foreign policy. This turned out to be a mixed blessing for his country, and for his own political future.

## **Risky games or obvious success?**

Interestingly, one of the few people, aside from Molotov, who foresaw the dangerous implications of Khrushchev's rise to the top, was Dulles – the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. At a White House conference in 1957, he called the Soviet leader 'the most dangerous person to lead the Soviet Union since the October revolution... Much of the time, he was obviously intoxicated, and could be expected to commit irrational acts... All in all, he (Dulles) would be glad to see Khrushchev go, but unfortunately there was no easy means of getting rid of him. Death or violence was about the only recourse'. It is no wonder that the CIA chief missed Stalin – 'this chess player', as Dulles called him, whose only blunder, in Dulles's view, was the Korean War.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>17</sup> Prezidium TsK KPSS, 2003, p. 300.

<sup>18</sup> FRUS, 1989, pp.119–120.

Khrushchev, of course, was neither a drunkard nor a totally irrational person, but he was indeed a gambler who was ready to take great risks, as the coming years would show. If Khrushchev showed what might be considered a degree of intoxication, this was caused by euphoria over the Soviet Union's increasing power, which was demonstrated in the late 1950's. The high rates of economic growth, a rapid build-up of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, the growing appeal of the Soviet model in the developing world, a remarkable progress in science and technology, exemplified by the launching of the first sputnik in October 1957 – all of these were clear manifestations of a dynamic socialist system, which, as Khrushchev sincerely believed, would soon prove itself superior to capitalism. '...Life has greatly surpassed even the boldest and most optimistic predictions and expectations', was his message to foreign Communist leaders in early 1961, and further: 'Our era ... is an era of socialist revolutions and national liberation revolutions; an era of the collapse of capitalism and liquidation of the colonial system'.<sup>19</sup> Naïve in retrospect, this exaggerated optimism was widely shared by the Soviet public. In our post-Soviet, post-Communist times it is difficult to imagine that less than fifty years ago the Soviet Union seemed to be catching up with, or even outcompeting, the United States. Still, in much of the world, this was the prevailing conception. Confidential polls, conducted by the US Information Agency in leading European countries, indicated that a majority of the populations in France, the United Kingdom and Italy shared the belief that the USSR was not only getting ahead of the US in military strength and space exploration, but that it was likely to win out in an overall competition with the US within the following 20–25 years, provided that there was no major war (only the West Germans favoured America's chances over those of the Soviet Union).<sup>20</sup>

Even far less impressionable, outside contemporaries such as the CIA's analysts and members of the Eisenhower administration were taking the Soviet challenge very seriously. According to the most conservative American government estimates, the Soviet GNP, by 1980, would

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<sup>19</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, *Kommunizm – mir i schast'ie narodov* (Communism means peace and happiness for the peoples), Moscow, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 12–13.

<sup>20</sup> *The Current State of Confidence in the US Among the West European Public* (August 1961), USIA Office of Research and Analysis, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, USIA, 1961.

be more than half of that of the US.<sup>21</sup> According to contemporary official Soviet plans, the USSR would eventually surpass the United States when it came to gross and per capita production, and would also reach the highest, Communist stage of development. Some Soviet economists knew better. The secret joke among them was: 'What if we really surpass the USA in economic growth? The Americans would then notice that we are running with no pants on'. But the basic idea of a Soviet challenge was still there. Khrushchev, with his 'we'll bury you' kind of rhetoric, made it even more dramatic, thus arousing the competitive American nation to achieve new levels of performance in science, education and social justice. In that sense, the Soviet challenge played the role of a 'functional equivalent of the Devil', as Arnold Toynbee once said, 'forcing us into doing things we should have done anyway'.<sup>22</sup>

The Suez Canal crisis was the first case in which Khrushchev attempted to use the new Soviet power to achieve a political advantage, by employing nuclear bluff and hardball pressure. This first attempt was an immediate success (though the Soviet side was taking too much credit for the collapse of the British-French-Israel intervention, conveniently ignoring the role played by the US): as one of the Central Committee members put it, at the Committee's meeting in June of 1957, 'without firing a single shot, without intervening, the Soviet Union forced two imperialist predators – Britain and France – to cease military action and withdraw their troops from Egypt'.<sup>23</sup> And, at the same meeting, Khrushchev gleefully said of his 'missile note' to Eden, Guy Mollet and Ben Gurion, in which he threatened to rain rockets on the European capitals, 'in those countries, even by the smell of the air, one could detect the impact of these messages' (the audience reacted to this boasting with 'laughter', as recorded in the minutes from that meeting).<sup>24</sup>

Encouraged by this first success and freed from the constraints of collective leadership, Khrushchev was now prepared for the next five-year period of Soviet policy, which I would call 'détente by intima-

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<sup>21</sup> For a review of these estimates, see V. Pechatnov, 'Sovetskii Soyuz glazami amerikanskoi razvedki v 1950–1980 godakh' (The Soviet Union through the Eyes of American Intelligence in 1950–1980s, *Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya*, no. 3, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> A. Toynbee (ed.) *The Impact of Russian Revolution 1917–1957. The Influence of Bolshevism on the World outside Russia*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Molotov*, 1998, p.441.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 478.

tion', to borrow a phrase from my American colleague and friend, historian John Gaddis.<sup>25</sup>

## From accommodation to intimidation

This change of tactics, from accommodation to intimidation, was not purely personal or frivolous. The fact was that détente by accommodation did not give the results that Khrushchev and his colleagues had expected. In Europe, 'the spirit of Geneva' and the new Soviet concessions had not given lasting returns. Soviet hopes for a growing discord among the major Western powers in the wake of Suez Canal crisis turned out to be little more than wishful thinking. The US was planning to provide its NATO allies, including the Federal Republic of Germany, with access to nuclear weapons. The West showed no appreciation of Khrushchev's idea of peaceful coexistence and was not going to reciprocate his substantial military cuts in conventional hardware and personnel. It is no wonder if Khrushchev felt that the West had given him the run-around, or if he was losing patience.

The new Soviet offensive took various forms: intensified peace propaganda, the introduction of Adam Rapacki's and Vladislav Gomulka's disarmament plans, designed to neutralise America's growing nuclear presence in Europe, and public threats to use new Soviet ballistic rocketry against countries willing to host American nuclear arms on their territories. But the first real showdown was to be the crisis in Berlin – the West's most exposed and vulnerable point. Historians still argue about the real motives behind Khrushchev's famous ultimatum of 1958. The ultimatum stated that the USSR would sign a separate peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic unless the Western powers granted the GDR recognition and agreed to make West Berlin into a free city. The separate peace treaty would naturally eliminate the juridical basis for the Western presence in, and access to, West Berlin. New documentary evidence confirms that the Soviet leader's main objective was to scare the West into recognising the GDR by raising the stakes on the West Berlin issue. 'The American leaders', Khrushchev said to the former Soviet ambassador to the GDR, G. Pushkin, 'are not such idiots as to

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<sup>25</sup> J. L. Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States. An interpretive history*, New York: Wiley, 1978, p. 240.

place themselves in danger of a (nuclear) strike because of West Berlin. They wouldn't go to war, even if we removed them from the city by force'.<sup>26</sup> As it turns out, Khrushchev had no exit strategy whatsoever – he had neither made preparations for actually signing that separate treaty with the GDR, nor contingency plans for a forcible removal of the Soviets' former allies from West Berlin and for turning it into a free city.

And of course, Khrushchev himself was not prepared to start a war over West Berlin. He gambled on the success of his ultimatums, so each time one failed to work he simply had to go back to the drawing board, so to speak. Still, the Soviet threat seemed credible enough to cause great concern and apprehension in the West and thus to heighten international tension.

## Inviting to a Soviet-US détente, turning away from China

Never known for consistency, Khrushchev tried to combine his new offensive with Soviet-American détente politics. The first official agreement on academic and cultural exchange, signed in 1958, the first American exhibition in Moscow the next year, exchanges of high-level visits, and finally Khrushchev's own famous trip to the USA in 1959, his pledge to further cut Soviet military personnel by one-third, marked the tide of the short-lived superpower rapprochement of the late 1950's. This rapprochement gained extra significance in the light of another external challenge – this time coming from the East – which the Kremlin had to face.

The break-up of the Soviet-Chinese alliance was probably bound to happen at some point, given China's ambitions and the Soviet Union's lack of control over China's development. But here also, Khrushchev's personality and style of diplomacy made matters worse. By trying to win Mao's favour through flattery and generosity, Khrushchev instead earned the latter's scorn, for the Chinese leader considered him vulgar and mediocre, unfit to be the leader of World Communism – a position which Mao increasingly tried to take on himself. Stung by Mao's arrogance, Khrushchev became provocative and bellicose in his dealings with the Chairman. Furthermore, the two countries developed in oppo-

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<sup>26</sup> V. Falin, *Bez skidok na obstoyatel'stva. Politicheskie Vospominaniya* (No Allowances to the Circumstances. Political Recollections), Moscow, 1999, pp. 79–80.

site directions: China, with its Great Leap Forward and radical anti-imperialism, was moving to the extreme left, while the USSR was moving away from Stalinism and toward some sort of rapprochement with the West. As the Chinese leaders took Khrushchev's bluff about nuclear superiority seriously, they saw no reason for his conciliatory stand vis-à-vis Washington, and saw it as ideological betrayal. The events of 1958–1959 contributed to the growing disagreement between the two countries: the Chinese failure to consult 'Big Brother' before shelling the islands of Quemoy and Matsu; the Soviet refusal to share nuclear weapons technology with its greatest ally; the Sino-Indian conflict over Tibet, during which the Soviet Union distanced itself from China, trying to stay neutral in the conflict. Still, Khrushchev clearly allowed his emotions to lead him astray when he, in the summer of 1960, abruptly recalled the Soviet advisers from China and terminated the Soviet assistance programs in that country – in violation of previous agreements. These acts paved the way to open hostility between the former allies. The growing Sino-Soviet split would eventually become a factor of great geopolitical importance, as it sapped the strength of the Soviet block.

### **A strong belief in the coming victory of Communism**

But in 1960, that tectonic change was still in a preliminary stage. More than that – there were new developments on the world scene, which served to strengthen Soviet optimism and Khrushchev's own assertiveness. The avalanche of African decolonisation and the Cuban revolution seemed to open whole new continents to the Soviet model and influence. Revolutionary romanticism gained new ground in the Kremlin, reinforcing its sense of a Marxist mission. That was especially important to Khrushchev – after all, he was a true believer in Communism's ultimate triumph. 'His conviction that the nuclear impasse was a natural prelude to 'peaceful coexistence' between the superpowers and a favourable environment for the spread of socialism among the new revolutionary-nationalist regimes', note the authors of an influential study of Soviet Cold War policies, 'made Khrushchev more impatient, bold and crude in his foreign policy calculations.'<sup>27</sup> Under Khrushchev's leadership the

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<sup>27</sup> V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1996, p. 194.

Soviet Union became a prime supporter of national independence movements and a principle force behind the adoption of a historical 1960 UN resolution, with which the General Assembly proclaimed the independence of the former colonies. If anything, Khrushchev's aggressive, shoe-thumping behaviour at that session seemed to highlight the Soviet challenge to the West ('I decided to turn up the heat,' he later explained).<sup>28</sup> Far-reaching plans of ideological and political penetration into Africa and Latin America were under preparation in Moscow, as revealed by fresh archival evidence.<sup>29</sup> New Soviet advances in space, culminating in Yuri Gagarin's first manned flight in orbit, filled the nation with a new pride and sense of national achievement. It is no wonder that the same year witnessed the inauguration of Khrushchev's new, grandiose plan to complete the construction of Communism in the Soviet Union by 1980.

## Back to sable-rattling rhetoric

In the meantime, the West showed few signs of adhering to a détente policy. The prospects of a successful Paris summit of 1960 were, to begin with, not bright. The downing of a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft on 1 May (still celebrated as an unofficial holiday by our Air Defence), and Eisenhower's open admission that he was responsible for those spying missions, provided Khrushchev with a welcome escape from the problematic summit. He blamed America solely for this incident, and decided to put any discussions on hold until there was a new president in the White House.<sup>30</sup>

The new president, John F. Kennedy, and his team seemed more promising, and – after the Bay of Pigs fiasco – more vulnerable to Soviet pressure than the old guard. During their meeting in Vienna, Kennedy, in essence, offered to cease American support of national liberation movements and to settle for a status quo. The Soviet leader, however, who was boasting about the coming worldwide victory of socialism, had

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<sup>28</sup> Khrushchev, *Vremya*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 454.

<sup>29</sup> A. Davidson, S. Mazov and G. Tsyarkin (eds) *SSSR i Afrika 1918–1960. Dokumental'naya istoriya otnoshenii* (USSR and Africa 1918–1960. A Documentary History of Relations), Moscow, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> M. R. Beschloss, *The Crisis Years. Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960–1963*, New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1991, pp. 230–234.

no desire to accept a ‘half-loaf’. Thus, in Anatolii Dobrynin’s recollection, a chance was lost for reaching ‘a draw in the Cold War’.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the Soviet premier renewed his West Berlin ultimatum – this time with particular vehemence. Shocked by Khrushchev’s brutal pressure, Kennedy became determined not to yield an inch.

Thereupon a famous war of nerves ensued between Moscow and Washington: with Khrushchev bringing a huge 50 megaton bomb to explosion, cancelling disarmament plans and employing sable-rattling rhetoric, while Kennedy boosted the military budget, mobilised the reserves, build bomb shelters and looked into military options in West Berlin, should the Soviets make good their threat to deny the Western powers access to the city. So far, no documentary evidence indicates that the Kremlin was planning to do so. Khrushchev was again relying on bluff and pressure tactics, balancing on the brink of war which, in his view, was unlikely anyhow. ‘...Everything carries a risk’, explained the Soviet Premier to his colleagues at the Presidium in May 1961, ‘but the risk we are running is justified, chances are about 95% against a war breaking out’.<sup>32</sup> But once again, his tactics failed. This time, however, the solution was not to reissue the ultimatum. Rather, it was a concrete construction – the infamous Berlin wall.

New evidence indicates that the Soviet leader was trying to kill several birds with this one, huge stone. First, he wanted to stabilise the GDR, which suffered under a constant flight of people to the West. Khrushchev’s hope was that once one had put a stop to this drain of people, as well as to the Western provocations, the GDR would be competitive with its Western counterpart and less dependent on supplies from the West. Secondly, he thought that West Berlin, once it was closed off from the eastern part of the city, would stagnate and become irrelevant to the West, thus laying the ground for its future status as a free city. Finally, he hoped that, given these consequences, the Western powers, including the FRG, would finally agree to recognise the GDR as a sovereign state.<sup>33</sup> Future developments would prove him wrong on all three counts.

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<sup>31</sup> The author’s conversation with Anatolii Dobrynin, July 24, 1997.

<sup>32</sup> Prezidium TsK KPSS, 2003, p. 503.

<sup>33</sup> G. Wettig, ‘The Berlin Wall: Expectations and Results’, in *Kholodnaya voina*, vol. 1, pp. 146–158.



The GDR did not become competitive, and its dependence on Western assistance would merely grow. West Berlin would hold out, becoming a vivid contrast to the shabby and dull East Berlin. Three years later, Khrushchev would tacitly concede defeat, by signing a treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and cooperation with the GDR that did not even resemble the peace treaty that he had used as a threat against the West. The Soviet Union would ease up its pressure for a termination of the Western powers' occupation rights and for the transformation of West Berlin into a free city. Khrushchev himself would come to admit that it had become 'impossible' to reach this goal (as he told his colleagues from the Party's top leadership in 1962).<sup>34</sup>

When it comes to a Western recognition of the GDR, the legacy of the Wall is far from obvious. The building of the wall solidified the division of Germany and slowed down the disintegration of the GDR. This led many in the West, and especially in the Federal Republic, to favour a status quo position on the issue of Germany. This facilitated the emergence of a new strategy, which aimed, not at isolating and breaking down the GDR, but at engaging it and pacifying it by means of close interaction. Thus, Khrushchev and the Wall contributed to the emergence of *Ostpolitik* and to the West's ultimate recognition of the GDR. At the same time, the Wall became a manifest demonstration of the GDR's internal weakness, which would ultimately lead to its collapse.<sup>35</sup>

## The Cuban affair – Khrushchev's greatest gamble

The year 1961 was also a turning point for Khrushchev's policy of strategic deception – that is, scaring the West with inflated notions of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. The Kremlin master's favourite ploy was to make his country look bigger and stronger, so that it would be treated as an equal by the United States. But now the captured U-2 photographic equipment, and the statements of high Pentagon officials, made it clear to the Kremlin that the US government was fully aware of the real strategic balance between the two countries. The actual missile gap favoured

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<sup>34</sup> Prezidium TsK KPSS, 2003, p.537.

<sup>35</sup> Harrison, Hope, 'The Berlin Wall, Ostpolitik, and Détente', in D. C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer (eds.) *Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969–1972*, German Historical Institute, Washington D.C., Bulletin Supplement 1, 2004, p. 5.

the US, and would grow as a result of a new strategic build-up, launched by the Kennedy administration. The impatient Khrushchev was looking for ways in which to narrow this gap, so that he could bludgeon the West into a settlement of Cold War issues. Cuba, being located in America's immediate neighbourhood, came in handy as a new, vulnerable spot. A missile base in Cuba would permit Moscow to exploit the best and most numerous weapons that it had available – medium and short range missiles – for threatening continental US. It would also provide the USSR with a bridgehead in America's immediate vicinity, which, to some degree, would counterbalance the US encroachment on Eurasia, close to Soviet borders. Besides, to Khrushchev it was essential not to lose this new ally in the Western hemisphere as the result of another American intervention.<sup>36</sup> Characteristically, he was fully aware of the risks involved in this huge 'Anadyr' operation, designed to bring nuclear weapons to this revolutionary island, distanced 11,000 miles from the Soviet shores: 'Bluntly speaking, it came close to being a great gamble', Khrushchev admitted in his memoirs. 'The gamble was an attempt to save Cuba, we ourselves might have gotten involved in the most devastating and unprecedented nuclear missile war'.<sup>37</sup>

US participants – and later, historians – were looking for some intricate strategic design behind Khrushchev's greatest gamble, such as a possible link to the Berlin crisis. However, documents that have recently become available show that this was a typical Khrushchevian improvisation, very similar to the tactics he used during the Berlin crisis, with no exit or fallback planning. For instance, the idea of trading Soviet missiles in Cuba for American Jupiters in Turkey came up late in the crisis and was probably inspired by the American press. And when, during the crisis, a participant at a Kremlin meeting suggested linking a settlement on the Cuba crisis to a settlement on West Berlin, Khrushchev's angry reaction was: 'We are exactly trying to extricate ourselves from one adventure and you propose to entangle us in another one'.<sup>38</sup> All Khrushchev had in mind, it appears, was to present the

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<sup>36</sup> For a fascinating account of these calculations based on new documentary evidence from Soviet archives, see A. Fursenko and T. Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble. Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958–1964*, London, Murray, 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Khrushchev, *Vremya*, vol. 2, 1999, p. 508.

<sup>38</sup> O. Troyanovskii, *Cherez gody i rasstoyania* (Through Years and Distances), Moscow, 1997, p. 247.

Americans with a *fait accompli* and force them back to the bargaining table. Confronted with the clear and immediate danger of a nuclear war, he ultimately proved reasonable enough to back away from his brinkmanship and thus save the world from a disaster – which would largely have been of his own making. And yet, he was still able to rationalise the outcome, presenting it as a recognition of the Soviet Union's new, global status: 'We have acquired great strength', stated Khrushchev on December 3, 1962 at a meeting of the Presidium. 'We are a member of the world club now. They (the Americans) got scared themselves'.<sup>39</sup> The other consolation for the Kremlin was the US's pledge not to invade Cuba again, even though Soviet diplomacy failed to turn this promise into a full-fledged legal obligation.

The Cuban missile crisis must have been a shattering and sobering experience for Khrushchev, and it led to a final stage of his foreign policy: the new *détente* of 1963–1964. There was a new understanding in Moscow (as well as in Washington) of the importance of curbing the nuclear arms race, and of stabilising East-West relations in general. Having been on the brink of a catastrophe, neither side would ever again directly challenge the other in its immediate sphere of influence. Besides, growing economic difficulties at home – a slowing down of the growth rate, food shortages and riots caused by rising food prices deflated Khrushchev's overconfidence and increased Soviet interest in expanding trade with the West. So, the year 1963 saw the signing of the Moscow Test Ban Treaty, the beginning of talks on nuclear non-proliferation, the establishment of a hotline between Moscow and Washington and the first grain deal between the US and the Soviet Union. In Germany, Soviet diplomacy became more receptive to the first signs of *Ostpolitik* and facilitated a partial liberalisation of travel between East and West Berlin. In the summer of 1964, Khrushchev's long-delayed visits to Sweden, Norway and Denmark took place in a spirit of good will and cooperation, even though Khrushchev still tried to lure Norway and Denmark away from NATO and embrace some kind of neutrality. But that pleasant cruise turned out to be Khrushchev's last trip abroad, and his farewell to the outside world. Three months later, his former sycophants ousted him from power.

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<sup>39</sup> Prezidium TsK KPSS, 2003, p.663.

## Legacies and lessons of the Khrushchev years

Khrushchev's mixed foreign policy record was one of the main reasons for his removal. In an unpublished report, prepared for the October 1964 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee, as well as in oral statements during that meeting, Khrushchev was accused of engaging in an adventurous 'balancing on the brink of war' during the Suez, Berlin and Cuban crises, of overextending the Soviet Union with his aid to the developing world and of implementing his own, erratic, personal diplomacy, thus diminishing the role of the Foreign Ministry.<sup>40</sup> The new collective leadership learned its lesson from the foreign policy experience of the Khrushchev era. The first thing they did was to narrow the gap between Soviet ambitions and capabilities by, on the one hand, moderating their international aspirations and, on the other, strengthening the military with respect to strategic as well as to conventional arms. Second, they abandoned the revolutionary romanticism about the 'third world' and the broad systemic competition with capitalism, and instead opted for a more traditional geopolitical rivalry with the United States. Ironically, this 'great game' would eventually severely weaken the Soviet economy and lead to a far greater overextension of Soviet power than had been the case under Khrushchev.<sup>41</sup>

The third thing they did was to avoid the improvised vacillation between accommodation and intimidation that had characterised the Khrushchev era and returned to a more predictable and steady management of East-West relations. Finally, there was a shift away from the highly personal and arbitrary political style of Khrushchev to the more collectivist and bureaucratic decision-making of the Kosygin-Brezhnev team. The experts on Soviet affairs in the US State Department's correctly predicted that 'The new regime will be more cautious in its approach to the West in the dual sense that it will eschew policies which may result in direct US-Soviet military confrontation and at the same time will be less enthusiastic than Khrushchev in finding areas of com-

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<sup>40</sup> "‘Takovy fakty, tovarishchi’. O Doklade D.Polyanskogo na Oktyabrskom (1964) Plenum TsK’ (‘“Such are the facts, comrades”. On D.Polyanski's Report at the October (1964) Plenary Meeting of CPSU Central Committee’), *Istochnik*, no. 2, 1998, pp. 112–117, 128, 132, 134.

<sup>41</sup> G. Lundestad, 'Imperial Overstretch. Mikhail Gorbachev, and the End of the Cold War', *Cold War History*, vol. 1, no 1, 2000, pp. 4–6.

mon interest with the US in particular. In sum, there will be no 1962 Cuba, nor will there be any spirit of Camp David'.<sup>42</sup>

In retrospect, the legacy of that period looks more significant than it did forty years ago. This was the time when the Soviet Union began to open up to the rest of the world and became a truly global power with interests and presence in many regions. It was then that the first attempt to humanise the Soviet system was made, and it was the time when Soviet dynamism and international appeal reached its peak. It was also the time when the Soviet foreign policy began to shed its Stalinist mould and the first real breakthroughs to peaceful coexistence took place.

The high hopes for a new peaceful world order were not entirely fulfilled. Old thinking and sluggish institutions on both sides of the Cold War divide prevented this. But without that first breakthrough, Gorbachev's foreign policy revolution – which was a logical continuation of Khrushchev's innovations – and the end of the Cold War would not have materialised. Among many other things, that would have meant that we would not have been here today to partake in a frank and friendly exchange of reflections on that remarkable era.

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<sup>42</sup> FRUS, 1989, p. 162.

## Chapter 2

# Soviet Disarmament Proposals and Khrushchev's Armed Force reduction

Natalya Egorova

Researchers who pose the question of when the Soviet disarmament policy was initiated should look more attentively at the years under Nikita Khrushchev's leadership. During this period, the problem of disarmament became high priority in Soviet foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> The measures that Khrushchev, from 1955 to 1959, took to reduce the Soviet armed forces were closely associated with the new Soviet disarmament initiatives.

As this subject matter is extremely broad and multifaceted, I have, in this paper, chosen to focus on two major problems: first, on how the USSR's approach to disarmament questions evolved from 1955 and up until the 1960s (with an emphasis on those proposals that were relevant to Northern Europe); and second, on determining the driving forces behind Khrushchev's decisions to reduce the Soviet army, in particular the army reduction of 1960.

Needless to say, the disarmament issue was an integrated part of Soviet foreign policy, as it embodied not only humanitarian values — people's aspirations for peace — but also 'the ideal of socialism'.<sup>2</sup> During the Stalin era, however, and under the particular conditions that prevailed at this early stage of the Cold War, the Soviet disarmament program primarily served propagandistic purposes (the collection of signatures in favour of the Stockholm Appeal, the proposal to wrap up the Peace Pact etc.). It did not have a corresponding place in day-to-day diplomatic practice.

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<sup>1</sup> I do not share the opinion that the formation of a new 'disarmament' direction in Soviet diplomacy took place at the end of 1960s — beginning of 1970s, held by V. M. Zubok, in *Drachlivyi Prem'er. Vneshnyaya politika Khrushcheva* (Fighting Premier. Khrushchev's Foreign Policy), *Rodina*, no. 3, 2004, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, *Za mir, za razrushenie, za svobodu narodov! Vystuplenie v N'yu-Yorke na XV Sessii General'noi Assamblei OON, 19 sentyabrya — 13 oktyabrya 1960 i dr.* (For peace, disarmament and freedom of peoples! Speech in New York at the XV Session of the UN General Assembly, 19 September — 13 October 1960 e.a.) Moscow: Gospolitdat, 1960, p. 89.

After 1955, the new Soviet collective leadership's disarmament policy went through various stages. The May 1955 proposals became the new Soviet leadership's first genuinely constructive initiative. These proposals took into consideration the Anglo-French suggestions for a limitation of the armed force level of the five great powers as well as various other suggestions made by the Western delegations (e.g. to divide the disarmament process into two stages, to establish control posts, etc.). The May 1955 proposals were presented to the Subcommittee of the UN Disarmament Committee, which was placed in London between 1954 and December 1957 (the Soviet delegation left the Subcommittee in November). According to the Soviet proposals, the armed forces of the USSR, USA and China should be reduced to 1–1.5 million in 1956–1957, for Great Britain and France a figure of 650,000 was proposed. In July 1955, at the Geneva summit, this Soviet initiative was supplemented by a proposal to limit the armed forces of any country that was not a member of the UN Security Council to no more than 150,000 to 200,000 men.<sup>3</sup>

On 13 August 1955, the Soviet government officially announced its attention to reduce the USSR armed forces by 640,000 men. This would be accomplished by 15 December that year. When we try to assess this figure, we should keep in mind that there is conflicting evidence as to the total size of the Soviet armed forces in 1955. In January 1960, at the fourth session of the Supreme Council, Khrushchev announced a new, substantial Soviet arms reduction. At this occasion he claimed that the Soviet troops numbered 5,763,000 men. However, a joint document from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party (further: Central Committee) and the Council of Ministers of 26 March 1955 on military matters contained a directive to increase the Soviet army to 5.5 million men.<sup>4</sup> It therefore appears that Khrushchev gave an exagger-

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<sup>3</sup> V. M. Khaitsman, *Sovetskii Soyuz. Razorushenie. Mir. Sobytiya i fakty* (The Soviet Union. Disarmament. Peace. Events and facts) Moscow: Institute of International Relations Publishing House, 1962, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 'Statement by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR on the Transfer of the 72nd Engineer Brigade to East Germany, 26 March 1955', *CWII Bulletin*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., Issue 12/13, 2001, p. 304.

ated figure for the total number of the Soviet troops in 1955.<sup>5</sup> However, as the archival material on this issue was still classified when this article was written, we shall have to rely on the official figures.

It should be noted that the Soviet troop reductions announced in 1955 were grounded on the ambition that informed Soviet foreign politics in general: to decrease international tension and build confidence between East and West. So, towards the end of the 1950s, in the light of a new Soviet approach to the West, the problem of disarmament gained more and more importance – from a propagandistic as well as from a practical point of view. It is no coincidence that, in 1957, under the direction of the very important Department of International Organisations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a special division was established whose task it was to deal with disarmament. Among the executives of this new division were such famous Soviet diplomats as Yu. Vorontsov, R. Timerbaev, O. Grinevskiy and others.

The ideological basis for this new approach to the disarmament problem was a reinterpretation of Marxist-Leninist theory, which stressed the possibility of peaceful coexistence between capitalist and socialist states over a protracted period of time, as well as the claim that, under current conditions, war was not absolutely inevitable. Khrushchev stated these theses in 1956 at the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, and developed them further in 1959, at the subsequent 21<sup>st</sup> Party Congress.

When discussing the Soviet disarmament policy of 1956–1958, one must emphasise that, on the diplomatic level, it was represented merely as a set of *partial* disarmament measures. On 30 April 1957, during a session of London's Subcommittee, the USSR delegation presented a memorandum: 'The Soviet Government Proposals on the question of partial measures in the sphere of disarmament'. The document stressed that, as the Western powers were not yet ready to adopt an overall disarmament program, the partial measures should be seen as a first step in that direction.

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<sup>5</sup> On the basis of recently published Russian documents, some scholars concluded that the Soviet armed forces numbered 5.4 million after Stalin's death. In 1953–1955 they were cut by about 600,000 without any official information. Thus, these scholars estimate that only 340,000 men had been demobilized by January 1956, and that the real number of the USSR armed forces in 1956 should be 4.4 million. See: M. Evangelista, "Why Keep Such an Army". Khrushchev's Troop Reduction', *Working Paper No 19*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 1997, p. 4.



New Soviet drafts suggested that the previous, concrete, Soviet measures for the reduction of conventional weapons<sup>6</sup> (including a liquidation of foreign military bases) should be supplemented with additional, important points referring to the signing of a non-aggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw Pact Countries and the establishment of denuclearised zones in some European regions. These proposals were presented at the Geneva Conferences of 1955 (both at the summit and at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers that took place that Autumn). In this connection, it is worthwhile to note that in 1955 the Soviet leadership avidly studied the Western plans, in particular suggestions made by the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, for the establishment of a demilitarised zone in Central Europe.<sup>7</sup> However, at the Foreign Ministers' meeting, the Soviet delegation rejected this proposal because the Soviet Union disagreed with another point in the Eden plan, this time concerning the German question.

Nevertheless, the idea of establishing zones of decreased tension in Europe found a new life in connection with Soviet initiatives for the prohibition of production and deployment of nuclear arms. In 1957, the Soviet government actively supported a proposal by the Polish Foreign Minister, Adam Rapacki, to prohibit the production and accumulation of nuclear weapons in the territories of West and East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, a proposal that Rapacki presented on 2 October in a speech given at the UN General Assembly. The so-called 'Rapacki Plan' was concretised in the Polish government memorandum of 14 February. On 20 February, the idea was developed further in the special 'Statement of the Soviet government on the question of creating a zone free from the production and deployment of atomic and hydrogen weapons in Central

<sup>6</sup> Taking into consideration that the Western countries departed from their earlier proposals, the Soviet representatives in the Subcommittee of the UN Disarmament Committee in 1956 agreed at the first stage of the disarmament process to the following increase of the armed forces' level: for the USSR, USA and China 2.5 million men, for Great Britain and France 750,000, for other countries 150–200,000 men. The USSR also went along with the Western wish not to link the proposals for conventional force and weapons reductions to questions concerning the prohibition of nuclear weapons' tests, or the production and use of these weapons, Khaitzman, *Sovetskii Soyuz*, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> 'Zapiska Ministerstva inostrannykh del v TsK KPSS "Plany zapadnykh derzhav v otnoshenii sozdaniya umen'shennoi napryazhonnosti v Evrope", 18 oktyabrya 1955' (Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the CPSU CC on 'Plans of the the Western Powers with reference to the establishment of the Zone of decreased tension in Europe', 18 October 1955), RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 115, ll. 55–56.

Europe'. As the proposal was closely associated with the German question that became acute with the second Berlin crisis (1958–1961), and with the US plans to establish multilateral, nuclear forces under the auspices of NATO, Khrushchev chose to include the idea of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe in all subsequent disarmament proposals.

It should be noted that, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet concept of regional denuclearisation became ever more inclusive. In 1958, during Khrushchev's visit to Albania, the Soviet leader proposed the establishment of non-atomic and non-rocket zones in the Balkans and in the Adriatic Sea region. But Soviet leaders paid special attention to northern Europe. The Soviet Union had a strong interest in strengthening the Finnish and Swedish neutrality, as a means of preventing NATO from gaining more influence in the area. It is a public secret that the Soviet leaders nourished the illusion that Norway and Denmark would withdraw from the North Atlantic alliance and join the neutral bloc.<sup>8</sup> Winning the support of neutral countries became an important element in the foreign policy of post-Stalinist Soviet Union. It is no accident that the British Foreign Office, in its analysis of a speech given by Nikolay Bulganin on 11 May 1955, at a meeting that marked the formation of the Warsaw Pact, focussed on passages related to this issue. The British diplomats interpreted the Soviet Defence Minister's references to the importance of Austria's future neutrality (after the signing of the State Treaty) and to Soviet support of other European, neutral countries as an expression of 'the Soviet wish for the establishment of a neutral belt'.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s, relations between the USSR and Finland were as close and friendly as they had ever been. In 1948, the

<sup>8</sup> As was noted in Khrushchev's memoirs, in his conversation with the Norwegian Prime Minister, Einar Gerhardsen, during the Soviet delegation's visit to Scandinavia in Summer 1964 he stressed that the question of Norway withdrawing from NATO 'was of great interest to us, and we strove for an agreement'. According to Khrushchev the main reasons for the Soviet strivings were that 'Norway is our neighbor. NATO threatens our security, sometimes it conducts military maneuvers close to our sea and land borders'. N. S. Khrushchev, *Vremya. Lyudi. Vlast'. Vospominaniya v 4 knigakh* (Time. People. Power. Reminiscences), 4 vols, Moscow: Moskovskie novosti, 1999, vol. 2, p. 552. See also: A. Komarov, 'Soviet Policy Toward Scandinavian Countries in the Khrushchev Period', in *Kholodnaya Voina i Politika Razryadki: Diskussionnyye Problemy, v 2 knigakh* (Cold War and the Policy of Détente: Problems and Discussions), 2 vols, Moscow: Institut Vseobshchei istorii, 2003, vol.1, pp. 91–102.

<sup>9</sup> 'Cypher telegram from Moscow (Mr. Parrot) to Foreign Office, 12 May 1955', in *Public Record Office: Foreign Office* (further PRO FO), 371/116118.

two nations had signed a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance ('in essence — a confirmation of friendly neutrality'<sup>10</sup>). In 1955, as a gesture of goodwill, the Soviet Union closed its military base Porkkala-Udd in Finland. Furthermore, Nikita Khrushchev's recently declassified guest book gives clear evidence of the friendly relations between the two nations. This book is a record of who visited Khrushchev in the Kremlin after he, in March 1958, had become First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Compared to contacts with neutral Sweden and NATO members Norway and Denmark those with Finland were both frequent and intensive.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it was during a visit to Finland in 1957 that Khrushchev first proposed the establishment 'of a zone of permanent peace' in the Baltic Sea area.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of 1957, Khrushchev praised 'the realistic statements made by the Norwegian minister, Mr. Gerhardsen, and the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Hansen that out of consideration for the national interests of their peoples refused to accept the deployment of missiles and nuclear weapons' and that had taken an important step towards establishing a nuclear-free zone in northern Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Bulganin's letters of 11 December 1957 and 8 January 1958 confirm that the USSR supported the idea of denuclearised zones. In these letters Bulganin requests that the European governments agree to sign a non-aggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, as well as to approve to the establishment of nuclear-free zones in Europe. The Swedish government's reaction to Bulganin's letters was basically positive, though Sweden did condemn the Soviets for walking out on the

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<sup>10</sup> A. M. Alexandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva. Vospominaniya diplomata* (From Kollontai to Gorbachev. Recollections of a Diplomat), Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994, p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> 'Uchet lits, prinyatykh Predsedatelem Soveta Ministrov tov. Khrushchevym N. S.' (Register of persons recieved by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers com. N. S. Khrushchev), *Istochnik*, no. 4, 2003, pp. 56–112.

<sup>12</sup> 'Rech Khrushcheva N.S. na prazdnike sovetско-finlyandskoi družby v Khelsinki, 8 iyunya 1957 g.' (Khrushchev's speech at the Soviet-Finland Friendship Holiday in Helsinki, 8 June 1957), in N. S. Khrushchev, *Za prochnyi mir i miroie sosushchestvovanie* (For lasting peace and peaceful coexistence), Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1958, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> 'Beseda N. S. Khrushcheva s glavoi amerikanskogo gazetno-izdatel'skogo tresta V. P. Herstom, 22 noyabrya 1957' (N. S. Khrushchev's conversation with the head of the American newspaper and publishing company W. P. Herst, 22 November 1957), in Khrushchev, *Za prochnyi mir*, p. 351.

Subcommittee of the UN Disarmament Committee.<sup>14</sup> The draft from the Danish government stated that the Soviet proposal of establishing a nuclear-free zone in central Europe deserved attention. At the same time, the Danish government suggested that some corrections be made in order to clarify what exactly the USSR defined as northern Europe, and thus included in the proposed nuclear-free zone. In other words, the Danish leaders were of the opinion that the definition should include those Soviet territories that formed a natural geographical part of 'northern Europe'. The Danish government also protested against Bulganin's expressed opinion that military bases on Danish territory constituted a threat to the Baltic States.<sup>15</sup>

As far as the USSR was concerned, it had established, and intended to keep, a powerful navy base equipped with the country's first nuclear submarines in the Barents and White Sea region. It therefore had no intention of including these northern, Soviet territories in what it termed 'northern Europe'. But at a time of Cold War confrontation it seems unreasonable to expect the USSR to unilaterally withdraw its nuclear weapons from the North. In 1964, during Khrushchev's visit to Denmark, the Soviet leader, in one of his interviews, gave the following answer to the question of whether the USSR intended to include its northern European territories in the nuclear-free zone: 'We are ready to include in the nuclear-free zone not only the northern part of our country but the whole territory of the USSR if, in fact, other countries with nuclear arms do the same'.<sup>16</sup>

In 1959, the Soviet proposals to establish a northern European missile- and nuclear-free zone developed further. During a speech given in Riga on 11 June (on the occasion of the GDR delegation's visit to the USSR), Khrushchev declared: 'The Soviet Union supports the idea of establishing a missile- and nuclear-free zone on the Scandinavian

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<sup>14</sup> 'Draft Reply (for the Parliamentary question), Notes for Supplementaries, 4 February 1958', *PRO FO 371/135294*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> 'Otvety N. S. Khrushcheva na voprosy uchastnikov sobraniya obshchestva Daniya-SSSR i studencheskogo ob'edineniya' (N. S. Khrushchev's answers to questions by the participants of the meeting of the society Denmark-USSR and the Students Union) in: N. S. Khrushchev, *Marshrut mira. Vizit Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR N. S. Khrushcheva v Daniyu, Shvetsiyu i Norvegiyu, 16 iyunya—4 iyulya 1964* (Itinerary of peace. Visit of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers N. S. Khrushchev to Denmark, Sweden and Norway, 16 June—4 July 1964), Moscow: Politizdat, 1964, p. 85.

Peninsula as well as in the basin of the Baltic Sea. Our German friends vigorously favour the transformation of the Baltic Sea to a sea of peace'.<sup>17</sup>

In a statement made on 17 July 1957, during a visit to Poland, Khrushchev made an important addendum to the Soviet position. The Soviet premier voiced the idea of the USSR as well as the Western powers guaranteeing the security of the Scandinavian countries in case these were included in a missile- and nuclear-free zone,<sup>18</sup> i.e. if they themselves were excluded from using these weapons.

The so-called Undén and Kekkonen plans were important contributions towards reaching an East-West consensus on the question of a denuclearisation of northern Europe. At a 1961 session of the UN General Assembly Swedish Foreign Minister Ö. Undén suggested the establishment of a 'club of non-nuclear countries'. To substantiate this position, the Swedish government declared that Sweden 'would be ready to participate in a European nuclear-free zone that was as far-reaching as possible, including non-nuclear states in Central and Northern Europe'.<sup>19</sup>

In a speech given on 28 May 1963, the President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, not only called for a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe but also asserted that in fact the Nordic nations had already formed such a zone and that it was now only a matter of securing the current state of affairs through mutual obligations.

The Soviet government responded positively to these initiatives, which were seen as important contributions to the military *détente*. In 1964 these issues were still very much on the agenda, e.g. when Nikita Khrushchev visited Scandinavia. The leading Western powers, however, were critical of the idea of a denuclearisation of Europe and argued that these proposals were to the disadvantage of NATO, as the USSR had intercontinental ballistic missiles available in the region. This argument did not hold, however, as the Soviet Union's nuclear potential, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was lagging considerably behind that of the West.

In order to advance the Soviet nuclear disarmament initiatives through concrete actions, the USSR Supreme Soviet, on 31 March 1958,

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<sup>17</sup> Khaitsman, *Sovetskii Soyuz*, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Cited by R. M. Timerbaev, *Rossiia i yadernoe nerasprostranenie. 1945–1968* (R. M. Timerbaev, Russia and nuclear non-proliferation. 1945–1968), Moscow: Nauka, 1999, p. 181.

announced a unilateral decision to halt its nuclear testing. Neither the US nor Great Britain followed suit, however, and from 3 October 1958, the USSR resumed its nuclear testing. On the diplomatic level, however, the Soviet Union still attempted to reach an agreement with the two Western nuclear powers to ban the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons. Finally, in Geneva 1959, the US, the USSR and Great Britain started negotiations on the reduction of nuclear weapons. During that year each party announced a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons.

From 1956 to 1958, the USSR continued to make political statements in favour of disarmament. While simultaneously taking the above-mentioned diplomatic initiatives, it continued the reduction of the Soviet armed forces. Nikita Khrushchev considered these measures contributions to 'the cause of disarmament and the securing of peace' as well as to the creation of an 'atmosphere of confidence', but by the same token, he hoped that the Soviet initiatives would induce the Western powers to take reciprocal steps.<sup>20</sup> It is here in its place to mention that one of Khrushchev's peculiarities, as a person and politician, was his excessive belief in the force of example. This was perhaps an expression of some sort of revolutionary romanticism.

As far as the concrete figures are concerned, on 14 May 1956, the Soviet government announced a new, substantial troop reduction – by 1.2 million men. One and a half years later, on 7 January 1958, the Soviet Union announced yet another reduction of its armed forces – by 300,000 men. This figure included 41,000 troops that it withdrew from GDR, 17,000 from Hungary and a number of Soviet troops, which were to be withdrawn from Poland and Rumania. All in all, from 1955 to 1958, the Soviet Union reduced its armed forces by 2,140,000 men.<sup>21</sup>

When analysing the motives behind Khrushchev's measures to reduce the armed forces during the 1950s, one must keep in mind not

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<sup>20</sup> 'Beseda N. S. Khrushcheva s korrespondentom amerikanskoi radiotelevizionnoi kompanii "Kolombia broadcasting system", 28 May 1958' (N. S. Khrushchev's conversation with a correspondent of the Radio and TV Company Columbia Broadcasting System, 28 May 1957), in Khrushchev, *Za prochnyi mir*, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> 'Doklad i zaklyuchitel'noe slovo tov. N. S. Khrushcheva na 4-oi sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 14 yanvarya 1960' (N. S. Khrushchev's speech and concluding words at the 4th Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, 14 January 1960), in N. S. Khrushchev, *Razorushenie – put' k uprocheniyu mira i obespecheniu druzhby mezhdu narodami* (N. S. Khrushchev, Disarmament – path to the strengthening of peace and the ensuring of friendship between peoples), Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1960, p. 30.

only that he had political as well as propagandistic motives for doing this (wanting to demonstrate the USSR's 'peace-loving' nature, for example), but also the fact that the Soviet Union had achieved considerable success with its missile-building project. Khrushchev had a somewhat exaggerated notion of nuclear missiles being the new weapon of contemporary warfare. This notion was informed by the recent Soviet successes in the field of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and the launching of the first 'Sputniks' in November 1957. After 1957, Khrushchev often expressed the idea that, because of the appearance of these new weapons, bombers were obsolete, and that the Soviet Union was ahead of the US when it came to missiles in general and to ICBM in particular.<sup>22</sup> But Khrushchev was bluffing. It is true that, after June 1956, the Soviet missile R-5M had been included in the USSR arsenal, but as late as in the early 1960s, the production of ICBM 'had not yet begun and there were only four unwieldy R-7s on a launching pad near Plesetsk in Northern Russia'.<sup>23</sup>

It has furthermore become known that while the Soviet Union appealed for the establishment of nuclear and missile-free zones in Europe, the Kremlin did not abandon its plans of 1955–1956, to deploy R-5M's with nuclear warheads outside of Soviet borders. During the summer of 1958, the Soviet Union began to station strategic nuclear missiles in East Germany and was doing so up until the spring of 1959. Historians who have studied Soviet foreign politics up until the Cuban crisis are of the opinion that Khrushchev's intentions were not aggressive. 'His key interest was to enforce the Soviet strategic position in case of a potential conflict'.<sup>24</sup> This was Khrushchev's primary reason, but he might also have felt that the presence of Soviet missile bases in East Germany would serve as a reinforcement of his ultimatum on the Berlin issue – in spite of the operation being top secret and carefully prevented from being leaked to the West. In August 1959, after Khrushchev and

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<sup>22</sup> 'Beseda N. S. Khrushcheva s korrespondentom amerikanskogo agenstva United Press Genry Shapiro, 14 noyabrya 1957 g.' (N. S. Khrushchev's conversation with the correspondent of the American Agency United Press, Henry Shapiro), Khrushchev, *Za prochnyi mir*, p. 263.

<sup>23</sup> V. M. Zubok, 'Khrushchev's 1960 Troop Cut: New Russian Evidence', *CWIIH Bulletin*, Issues 8–9, 1996/1997, p. 417.

<sup>24</sup> M. Uhl, V. Ivkin, "Operation Atom". The Soviet Union's Stationing of Nuclear Missiles in the German Democratic Republic', 1959, *CWIIH Bulletin*, Issues 12–13, 2001, p. 303.

Eisenhower had agreed to exchange visits, and after they had agreed on a summit meeting, the Soviet military brigade and missiles were hastily withdrawn from East Germany – the Soviet leadership had no intention of transforming the Berlin crisis into a large-scale conflict.

It is interesting to note that the missiles, after being withdrawn from East Germany, were moved to the Kaliningrad region on the Baltic coast. This is additional evidence that, during the Cold War years, the USSR did not include its European northern parts in what it defined as a denuclearised zone. By the end of the 1950s, the ideological, political and military impact of the Cold War was still felt in the Soviet Union, and caused a certain amount of inertia. Furthermore, Khrushchev's impulsiveness as a person and inconsistency as a politician reinforced the contradictory character of the Soviet disarmament policy.

Khrushchev's visit to the United States in September-October 1959, and the successful negotiations with President Eisenhower in Camp David, were crowned by a new Soviet disarmament initiative. Reporting to the plenary session of the UN General Assembly on 18 September 1959, Khrushchev advanced the idea of a program of general and complete disarmament. In his speech he emphasised that 'a general and complete disarmament will remove all obstacles arisen during the discussion of the partial disarmament issues and will clear a way for the establishment of overall and total control'.<sup>25</sup> I will here leave aside the finer details of this Soviet proposal and focus on its principal feature. Firstly, the idea was that this ambitious goal should be accomplished over a period of merely four years. During its first stage, only armed forces and the conventional weapons were to be reduced. The second stage would conclude with the withdrawal of all troops and military bases from foreign territories. In the final stage, all nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, all military organisations and structures, including military academies, would be destroyed or abolished. The general and complete disarmament would leave at the disposal of the individual states only a small police force armed with hand-held weapons, which would serve to maintain internal order and as a means to protect the security of the states.

This huge program seems utopian, and was obviously not based on a realistic assessment of the conditions under which it was proposed. It

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<sup>25</sup> *Pravda*, 19 September 1959.



was based on an ideological premise, which had been reiterated in all Communist Party documents during the late 1950s and early 1960s: it was possible to change the world's power balance to the benefit of socialism, which again would open up for the 'possibility' of eliminating war in the nuclear era, by means of general and complete disarmament.<sup>26</sup> Simultaneously and parallel to the suggested radical plan for disarmament Khrushchev's new program contained some pragmatic measures, which could serve as a platform for negotiations. The Soviet leaders, quite reasonably, assumed that the Western countries would not be ready for a general and complete disarmament. Accordingly they envisioned the possibility and necessity of further negotiations on partial disarmament. So, even though the Soviet concept of disarmament evolved from partial measures to a generalised approach, only the partial measures would be of practical importance. In fact, the partial measures of the new Soviet disarmament program repeated the proposals of 1956–1958, including the closing of military bases on foreign territories, the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe and the prohibition of nuclear weapons production and deployment.

The great dream of general and complete disarmament was generally conceived as being so attractive that the UN General Assembly adopted the joint Soviet-American resolution that called for such an across-the-board disarmament and requested that all governments apply themselves to realising it. This encouraged Khrushchev to go ahead with the idea of a general and complete disarmament and motivated his next step — a new, significant reduction of the Soviet armed forces.

On 8 December 1959, Nikita Khrushchev sent a memorandum to the Presidium of the CC CPSU in which he called for a further unilateral reduction of the Soviet troops by 1.2 million men. The document reveals that this was entirely his own initiative. The initiative showed little regard for the mood within the bureaucracy being concerned about

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<sup>26</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, *O mezhdunarodnom polozhenii i vneshnei politike Sovetskogo Soyuzu. Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva na 3-ei sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR 31 oktyabrya 1959* (N. S. Khrushchev, About the international situation and the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. N. S. Khrushchev's report on the 3-d Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on 31 Oktober 1959), Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959, p. 33.

the consequences of the previous large Army cut.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Khrushchev's memorandum gives an insight into his primary motives for taking the decision. There is every reason to believe that his principal object was to take advantage of the favourable political situation in order to enforce the Soviet Union's peaceful offensive. As he wrote in this classified document, which, however, was filled with propagandistic terms, the new initiative 'would be an irresistible blow to the enemies of peace, the warmongers, and the Cold War advocates'.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Khrushchev had another important motive, which had to do with his growing faith in the superiority of nuclear weapons. He was convinced that nobody could threaten a Soviet Union armed with nuclear missiles. In the memorandum, Khrushchev repeats a lot of his bluff about the USSR having not only 'a great variety of rockets' but also that it 'had accomplished the initiation of a mass production of these rockets' and that this weapon could reach 'any point of the globe'. These claims seem to have led Khrushchev to believe that since the USSR had such a powerful nuclear-missile shield, it was unnecessary to 'have as huge an army as we have had'.<sup>29</sup>

In the memorandum, the military reason for reducing the army was supplemented by economic strategies. Khrushchev reminded the Central Committee members that the ideological dispute with the capitalist world would be decided 'not by war' but 'by means of economic competition'. From this point of view, even the Western countries' flat refusal to reduce their troops would play into the Soviet Union's hands, because these countries, by holding on to their large armies, would exhaust their economies, whereas the USSR would spend the saved resources on reinforcing its economic potential.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> 'Zapiska I. Serova v TsK KPSS o nedovol'stve nekotorykh ofitserov Zabaikal'skogo voennogo okruga organizatsionnymi meropriyatiyami po sokrashcheniyu Vooruzhennykh Sil, 1 marta 1958' (I. Serov's Memorandum to the CC CPSU about the dissatisfaction of some officers of Zabaikal District over the organisational measures regarding the armed forces reduction, 1 March 1959), *Voennye arkhivy Rossii*, 1 issue, 1993, pp. 301–302.

<sup>28</sup> 'Derzhat' takuyu bol'shuyu armiyu — znachit ponizhat' nash ekonomicheskii potentzial', *Kopia zapiski N. S. Khrushcheva v Prezidium TsK KPSS o dal'neishem sokrashchenii Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR*, 8 dekabrya 1959 g. (To keep such an army means to lower our economic potential. Copy of N. S. Khrushchev's memorandum to the Presidium of the CC CPSU about the further reduction of the USSR armed forces, December 1959), *Istochnik*, no. 6, 2003, p. 102.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Needless to say, on 14 December 1959 Khrushchev's proposal was approved by the Presidium of the Communist Party Central Committee, in spite of some protests from the side of the military leadership. The new Soviet initiative, to unilaterally reduce the armed forces of 3,623,000 men by 2,423,000 was announced by him when giving his report to the USSR Supreme Soviet session on 14 January 1960. The speech had two distinguishing features: its emphasis on the economic necessity of a new cut in military spending and the exposition of his personal take on Soviet military power. As to the latter, he practically repeated what he had said in his memorandum, claiming that the 'state's military capabilities depended more on nuclear 'fire power', than on 'how many soldiers we have under arms'.<sup>31</sup> In connection with this statement, Khrushchev claimed, somewhat crudely, that the Air Force and Navy had lost their significance. His reliance on missiles and atomic submarines resulted in the destruction of new Soviet cruisers the building of which was almost completed.<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to interpret this approach as evidence of a prudent economic policy. Furthermore, it contributed greatly to the Soviet military leadership's dissatisfaction with the new troop reductions.

In his memoirs, Khrushchev admits that the armed force reduction of 1960 was a very painful question. He claims, however, that economic reasons informed his decision, e.g. the need to raise people's standard of living.<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that this interpretation of the rationale behind the Soviet troop reduction of 1960, i.e. that economic concerns were the primary cause, has its supporters among contemporary historians.<sup>34</sup> But Khrushchev had a whole series of motives for making the reduction (political, economic, military etc.), and it is questionable whether economic reasons were his highest priority. If one keeps in mind the reasons that Khrushchev claimed motivated previous Soviet disarmament initiatives, his frequent statements about the country not needing additional resources for the implementation of its Seven-year-plan, and adds to these the available documents about the disarmament

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<sup>31</sup> *Pravda*, 15 January 1960.

<sup>32</sup> A. B. Shirokorad, *Flot, kotoryi unichtozhil Khrushchev* (Navy Destroyed by Khrushchev), Moscow: AST, 2004, pp. 369, 401.

<sup>33</sup> Khrushchev, *Vremya*, vol. 4, 1999, pp. 243–246.

<sup>34</sup> For an analysis of this conception see Evangelista, *Why Keep Such an Army*, pp.17–26.

decision-making process, it becomes quite clear that political-ideological considerations were a decisive factor.

New, important evidence has been uncovered demonstrating that this is indeed the case, such as the newly declassified stenographic notes from the Presidium meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, which mention directives given to the Soviet delegation on the Ten Nation Disarmament Conference planned for Geneva on 15 March 1960. The discussion within the Presidium focussed on Khrushchev's new proposal for changing the position previously held by Soviet Union, by initiating a program of general and complete disarmament, not merely a reduction of conventional weapons but of nuclear weapons as well. The Western countries had viewed the great Soviet troop reductions as a high-level rearmament rather than disarmament. Keeping this in mind, Khrushchev now intended to exploit General de Gaulle's idea, broached by de Gaulle before France began its nuclear tests, that the destruction of nuclear weapon delivery systems (missiles, bombers, nuclear weapons submarines etc.) should be a first priority. In Khrushchev's opinion, such an initiative would be a firm demonstration of the Soviet Union's intention to give up its powerful nuclear weapons for the sake of general and complete disarmament. The content of this heated discussion, in which Nikita Khrushchev, Anastas Mikoyan, Andrei Gromyko, Leonid Brezhnev and other members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party actively partook, reveals that, apart from the long-term, practical goals of closing the military bases and inducing NATO and other Western alliances to reduce their forces, the new initiative pursued one important political goal – to preserve and enforce the Soviet Union's leading position on the issue of disarmament.<sup>35</sup>

It is worth noting that because the Kremlin considered peaceful coexistence an essential part of its ideological struggle, it viewed the disarmament policy as one more field of confrontation with the West. And within this context, Khrushchev's new proposals were seen as 'an

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<sup>35</sup> 'Stenograficheskaya zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS po voprosu "O direktivakh sovetskoi delegatsii v Komitete desyati po razorusheniu", 1 fevralya 1960' (Stenographic notes of the Presidium of the CC CPSU Meeting on the Directives to the Soviet Delegation at the Ten Nation Disarmament Committee Conference, 1 February 1960), in A. A. Fursenko (ed.), *Arkhiy Kremlya. Prezidium TsK KPSS, 1954–1964*, Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 424, 426.

introduction into the battle of the main powerful reserve'.<sup>36</sup> From this point of view, it was of great importance *where* and *when* the Soviet initiatives were presented. Because the Paris summit had been brought to an end with the U-2 incident and Khrushchev's ultimatum to Eisenhower, a new Soviet initiative was submitted to the Ten Nation Disarmament Committee Conference on 2 June 1960. But on 27 June, the Soviet government announced its intention to abandon the committee work because the rigid Western position had caused a deadlock in the negotiations and the Soviet Union thought it essential to present the disarmament issue at the next UN General Assembly session. This is why the new Soviet disarmament proposals were included in the document: 'The Main Points of the Treaty on General and Complete Disarmament', which Nikita Khrushchev, as head of the Soviet delegation, submitted for consideration at the 15<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly on 3 September 1960.

As a result of the growing international tension caused by the failed Paris summit and the escalation of the Berlin crisis, Khrushchev's speeches became increasingly aggressive. While Khrushchev was touting the peacefulness of Soviet foreign policy, and while he was promoting the idea that the disarmament process had to begin with the destruction of the nuclear weapons delivery systems (including the Soviet ICBM), he, at the same time, made threats against the West. On 11 October, on the UN floor, Khrushchev thus raised the arms race issue, making the following statement: 'We don't want this race but we are not afraid. We will kill you! We have already set assembly lines in motion that have the capacity for a mass production of missiles'.<sup>37</sup>

In 1961, the aggravated international relations situation reinforced contradictions within Soviet foreign policy. When presenting their country in international organisations, Soviet diplomats had to continue advocating Khrushchev's idea of general and complete disarmament, but militarily the USSR implemented a number of measures that were at variance with this peaceful course.

Khrushchev once again brought up the necessity of establishing a nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe in a letter to the Swedish Prime

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 425, 431.

<sup>37</sup> 'Vystuplenie N. S. Khrushcheva na XV Sessii General'noi Assamblei OON, 11 oktyabrya 1960', Khrushchev, *Za mir*, 1960, p. 220.

Minister Tage Erlander (5 November 1961), as he did to Finnish President Uhro Kekkonen during a visit in November that year. The USSR, however, had no plans of diminishing its military presence in the Soviet part of Northern Europe, or of withdrawing their nuclear weapons from the region. Both superpowers – the USA and the USSR – looked upon Northern Europe and the Arctic basin as an important strategic region for carrying out atomic strikes.

On 2 September 1961, the Soviet Defence Minister, Rodion Malinovskii, announced that in September–October, the Soviet North Navy, together with the missile units and the air force, would carry out exercises in the region of the Barents Sea, 'practising the use of a variety of modern weapons'.<sup>38</sup> This was the Soviet reply to similar exercises held by NATO off the coast of Norway.

On 8 July 1961, Nikita Khrushchev announced that because international tension had grown more serious, the Soviet government had decided to suspend the armed force reductions that had begun in 1960. And on 31 August, referring to the continuation of nuclear testing by France and other evidence of an armament race taking place in the NATO countries, the Soviet government stated that it had given up its moratorium on nuclear weapons tests. The 100 megaton thermonuclear bomb that the Soviet Union exploded on 30 October 1961 was of record size. Experts emphasise, however, that this bomb 'never had been a real weapon and had no significance from a military point of view'.<sup>39</sup> Bringing this super bomb to explosion served the purpose of demonstrating Soviet power and was calculated to have a 'deterrent' effect on 'the aggressive' West.

Khrushchev continued to adhere to the attractive, propagandistic idea of a general and complete disarmament until his dismissal on 14 October 1964. In keeping with his disarmament initiative, the World Congress on General and Complete Disarmament took place in Moscow in July 1962. It is interesting to note that Khrushchev, in his speech at the Congress, expressed a somewhat changed view of how probable a war was. 'In the contemporary epoch', claimed the Soviet leader, 'there

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<sup>38</sup> Khaitsman, *Sovetskii Soyuz*, p. 109.

<sup>39</sup> Yu. N. Smirnov, 'Kholodnaya voina kak yavlenie yadernogo veka', (The Cold War as a phenomenon of Nuclear Age), in N. I Egorova and A. O. Chubaryan (eds), *Kholodnaya voina. 1945–1963 gg. Istoricheskaya retrospektiva*, Moscow: OLMA PRESS, 2003, p. 604.

is no absolute certainty of war but there is no absolute certainty of peace either'. Continuing this line of thought, Khrushchev emphasised that from this point of view 'it is impossible to stay neutral on the question of a general and complete disarmament'.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to his recent initiative on armed force reduction, Khrushchev warned that 'nobody should be waiting for a unilateral disarmament of the countries in the socialist camp'.<sup>41</sup>

The increasingly confrontational character of the Soviet Union's relations to the US and other Western countries not only led to the dangerous Cuban crisis of 1962 but it also hampered the task set at the 1961 Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee. Nevertheless, the Cuban crisis did intensify negotiations on a nuclear ban treaty between the USSR, USA and Great Britain. As a result of Khrushchev agreeing to the American proposals the treaty was finally signed on 5 August 1963.

This was the first real step taken towards nuclear disarmament, and was the greatest achievement of Khrushchev's disarmament policy. A discussion of Nikita Khrushchev's complex legacy in the sphere of disarmament must, however, mention a less visible but equally positive achievement. Under his leadership, the Soviet Union reformed the disarmament negotiation process and played an important role in establishing the Ten Disarmament Committee, which later became the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee. Besides representatives of the two military-political blocs, this latter committee included representatives from neutral countries, such as Sweden.

To conclude I would like to emphasise the following: In spite of his devotion to the ideological dogma of the inevitable victory of Communism and his exaggerated accounts of the socialist system's achievements Nikita Khrushchev was a rather pragmatic politician. Therefore he must have known that the idea of a general and complete disarmament was utopian. This proposal was, in fact, never worked out in detail by professional diplomats and scholars. Nevertheless, it was the

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<sup>40</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, *Vseobshchee i polnoe razorushenie — garantiya mira i bezopasnosti vseh narodov. Rech na Vsemirnom kongresse za vseobshchee i polnoe razorushenie i mir, 10 June 1962* (N. S. Khrushchev, General and complete disarmament is the guarantee for peace and security for all people. Speech at the World Congress for general and complete disarmament and peace, 10 June 1962), Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1962, p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

basis of a number of concrete Soviet disarmament proposals presented to the West during the disarmament negotiations.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, the Cold War had shaped international relations in such a manner that both sides adhered to the idea of nuclear 'deterrence' and power policy, and neither the Berlin conflict nor the Cuban crisis – for which Khrushchev to a large degree was responsible – made it any easier to reach compromises on the disarmament issue. The political climate caused by the Cold War, as well as by the fact that the Soviet Union viewed the principle of peaceful coexistence as a means of intensifying the ideological struggle, led to a situation in which the infliction of political and ideological defeat on the enemy became prioritised at the expense of the efforts to reach agreements.

'Missile diplomacy', which Khrushchev abused in his argumentation for a realisation of the Soviet armed force reduction, led the US to intensify its nuclear armament. Under the new leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, the USSR answered by increasing its armed forces by close to one million men, and with mass production of missiles and an expansion of its nuclear programs. Thus, the arms race had intensified.





## Chapter 3

### Khrushchev and the German Question

*Alexei Filitov*

In his memoirs Khrushchev formulated his views on Germany quite explicitly:

‘As for Germany, we had no doubt. We were absolutely sure that it would become a socialist state. (We thought) that indeed other nations would follow (its example). It is natural, therefore, that Stalin, after Germany’s defeat, in order to secure the sympathies of the German people, spoke out in favour of a united Germany. He thought that a united Germany would be a socialist state and that it would become an ally of the USSR. This was a conception that was shared by Stalin and all of us, by his entourage’.<sup>1</sup>

It is a moot question whether Khrushchev’s description of Stalin’s motives and calculations with regard to post-war Germany was correct. At any rate, Stalin was not a man who readily disclosed his designs, even to his closest associates. Furthermore, on the rare occasions when he has been known to consult them on the subject of foreign affairs, Khrushchev’s name has been conspicuously absent from the list of those consulted. An illuminating example: in May–June 1946, the Soviet dignitaries were requested to present their views on the American draft treaty for the disarmament and demilitarisation of Germany; the list of the participants in this ‘poll’ is indeed impressive; characteristically, Khrushchev was not among them.<sup>2</sup> All in all, no evidence indicates that the account given by Khrushchev of Stalin’s – and his own – view on Germany during his period of belonging to Stalin’s ‘entourage’ was based on anything but the afterthoughts of an ageing pensioner (prompted, one may surmise, by the fact that he had read translations of Western books on the subject, to which he had access during his tenure as First Secretary).

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<sup>1</sup> *Voprosy istorii*, Moscow, 1993, no. 9, pp. 91–92.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of the participants in the staged ‘survey’, see G.P. Kynin and J. Laufer (eds), *SSSR i germanski vopros. 1941–1949. Dokumenty iz Arkhiva vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Moscow, 2000, vol. 2, p. 574.

## **Renewed Soviet interest in a united Germany? Reformers and Conservatives**

Only after Stalin's death did Khrushchev get involved in foreign affairs in general, and in the German question in particular. A short synopsis of the discussion between the Soviet leaders and the delegation from the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) on 3 June 1953 may contain Khrushchev's first documented utterance on Germany. The Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Otto Grotewohl, who was a member of the delegation, wrote this synopsis. According to this synopsis, Khrushchev's statement was by far the most laconic utterance made by any member of the 'collective leadership': 'L.P.G.: maximally voluntary'. One may suppose, of course, that Khrushchev used more words to express his viewpoint, but there is no reason to doubt that Grotewohl's shorthand rendition gives us the gist of what he said. The viewpoint was not only trivial ('yes' to the idea of collective farming and 'no' to the use of coercion in its implementation were standard elements of Marxist political correctness), but it lacked even the modicum of censure of the German 'friends' and their politics that had characterised statements made by Khrushchev's colleagues, who had spoken earlier. These were Malenkov, Beria and Molotov, and later Kaganovich and Mikoyan; Malenkov returned to make a last speech on behalf of the Soviet contingency. It is interesting that Walter Ulbricht, the leader of SED delegation, in his answer to his Soviet hosts chose to ignore all statements except that made by Khrushchev. His first words were: 'No panic within the L.P.G. First, lower the requisition quotas; second, improve equipment of MTS (state-owned machine and tractor stations with the task to supply the collective farms with technical equipment, as well as to supervise them, both economically and politically, editors note)'. In other words, he offered a reply to Khrushchev (and only to Khrushchev) by stating that there is no need to radically change course; less requisition and more equipment will be sufficient to remedy the situation and provide for the peasants who voluntarily joined the L.P.G. This was the approach, however, that all the other Soviet hosts had rejected out of hand – Malenkov, Beria, Molotov and, most energetically, Kaganovich, who emphasised: 'Our document says reversal, yours says reform'.

The document that Kaganovich here referred to was the USSR Council of Ministers' recommendations 'On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR' No. 7576, which was dated 2 June 1953. Christian F. Ostermann, who published this document in his work on the events of June 1953 in the GDR, made the following comment: 'The order was aimed at stabilising the GDR as well as strengthening the Soviet position on the German issues, both in Germany itself and on the international arena'. He also framed a pertinent question: 'Did this reflect a renewed Soviet interest in German unity?'<sup>3</sup>

New archival findings, e.g. the draft of a talk given by Georgii Malenkov at the above-mentioned meeting with the GDR delegation, clearly support an affirmative answer. This draft obviously reflected the consensus among the Soviet leaders, including Khrushchev. This consensus was superficial and shaky, however. On 3 June 1953, the discussion between the Soviet leaders and the German delegation reveals a hidden conflict among the Soviets – between 'reformers' and 'conservatives', the former represented by Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Kaganovich and Mikoyan, the latter by Khrushchev (who, as stated above, refrained from mentioning any mistakes made by the 'German friends'), and possibly by Bulganin (he was conspicuous by his silence, which may indicate a reluctance to support the majority line). The 'conservatives' held a minority position at the meeting, but the fact that the head of the German delegation agreed with them, to some degree, made up for this. As an old Comintern hand he knew only too well how to sabotage and compromise the 'New Course' and thus turn the tables on the 'reformers'.

The GDR crisis of 17 June was instrumental in rescuing the conservatives' cause. Whether they masterminded and/or provoked this crisis is still a matter of speculation, but it cannot be denied that they exploited it brilliantly. The mere idea of finding a middle ground on the German issue was compromised, and even the term 'German unity' became somewhat suspect. The Khrushchev-Ulbricht 'connection' (which may date back to the battle at Stalingrad) bore fruit, and for years to come it was a factor (very negative, to be sure) in Soviet policy vis-à-vis Germany.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> C. F. Ostermann (ed.), *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, Budapest, Central European University Press 2001, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> A. M. Filitov, 'SSSR i GDR: god 1953' (The USSR and the GDR: the Year 1953), *Voprosy istorii*, Moscow, 2000, no. 7, pp. 123–135.

These conclusions, and those that are to follow, are, of course, based on circumstantial evidence only – one can hardly expect anything resembling an open dispute between the Soviet leaders, even less so in front of foreign guests. Still, the months following the death of Stalin were only too obviously characterised by signs of friction and dissent in the Soviet decision-making mechanism, a fact that an analysis of the period confirms.

## **Molotov – not Khrushchev – as the initiator of new ideas**

Many historians and others have been written about this brief, but crucial, period in Soviet history, the author of the present chapter being one of them. Predictably, different analysts reach different conclusions: some are apt to discover signs of a far-reaching change in Soviet policies, verging on an approach to the West, others have a more cautious view; the researchers also differ with respect to whom they believe to have initiated – or opposed – the reassessment of past policies. Contrary to the majority of researchers in the field, this author believes that the new impulses in policy planning (with respect to Germany, at least) came from the Foreign Ministry (Molotov), that they were supported – but not initiated – by the state security apparatus (Beria) and were opposed by the Party Leadership (Khrushchev).

What is the factual basis for this belief? The Foreign Ministry's work on the formulation of a new position on the German issue predates the 'hectic activities' exhibited by Beria's people. According to Pavel Sudoplatov, the latter began 'just before May Day', whereas the first Foreign Ministry memo was dated 18 April. In early May, both Beria and Molotov placed memos concerning the events in GDR on the agenda of the highest Party organ; however, the Beria memo (on the mass exodus) combined the objective and critical description of the situation with recommendations of a rather traditional and 'unrealistic' character, which were apparently left in limbo; in contrast, Molotov's indictment of SED chief Ulbricht for defining GDR a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was a clear repudiation of the course for 'construction of socialism in the GDR'. It was followed by a decision to summarily reject Ulbricht's 'innovation' as well as his collectivisation drive.<sup>5</sup> In neither case did Khrushchev

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<sup>5</sup> Filitov, *SSSR i GDR*, pp. 124-125.

apparently voice a dissenting view. However, a dissenting view may be detected in a third memo issued during the process of the decision-making – in conjunction with another document presented by the Foreign Minister entitled ‘On further measures (to be taken) by the Soviet Government in connection with the German question’.

The first draft, which Molotov sent to Malenkov on 3 May, Malenkov being a senior member of the Presidium (the list of recipients also included Beria, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich and Mikoyan – incidentally, the same persons who took part in the meeting with the SED delegation on 3 June), began with a definitive statement: ‘In accordance with the Potsdam Agreement, the central issue of the USSR’s policy towards Germany should be considered that of the national reunification of Germany on a peaceful and democratic basis’. On 5 May, an ‘exchange of views’ on the draft took place during the meeting with the Presidium of the Soviet Communist Party. It was obviously found wanting, and on 10 May, Molotov circulated another draft in which he formulated the ‘main task of the Soviet Union’ with respect to the German question altogether differently: ‘the firm implementation of a policy that strengthens the political and economical positions of the GDR, which has already taken the path of development as a People’s Democracy...’. The GDR was characterised as a ‘reliable ally of the USSR’ (sic!), and as the maximal goals vis-à-vis the Western powers. Indeed, ‘some provisional and partial agreements on all-German questions’ were mentioned. One may concur with the German historian Elke Scherstjanoi’s conclusion that this draft reflects a trend towards ‘a consolidation of the sphere of influence’, towards ‘a cementing of the German dual statehood’.<sup>6</sup>

What Scherstjanoi leaves unanswered, though, is what might have been the reason behind the Foreign Minister’s change of attitude. The answer is, however, obvious: one or more of the recipients of Molotov’s original paper objected to its message. Who might this person, or persons, be? Malenkov, Beria, Mikoyan or Kaganovich? Hardly, unless their attitude miraculously changed during the period of one month. A spon-

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<sup>6</sup> Elke Scherstjanoi, ‘Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik nach Stalins Tod 1953’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, München, 1998, Heft 3, p. 516. However, the author is mistaken with respect to the chronology, since she thinks that the draft of 3 May was presented on 27 May, contrary to the actual chain of events.

taneous change of heart on the part of Molotov, who authorised the original draft, seems even less likely. Khrushchev and possibly Bulganin may be a sure bet considering the above mentioned meeting of 3 June. The conservatives' victory in early May was short-lived; the consensus reached and expressed by Malenkov in his introductory address at the meeting of 3 June was in its essence a reversal of the declaration of 10 May and a return to that of 3 May. The events of 17 June, however, gave the situation a new and final twist. All in all, one might say that the shrewd operation to save Ulbricht's regime in 1953, managed to convert the position of helpless minority into that of crushing supremacy.

### **A Soviet proposal at the Four-Power meeting in 1954**

At the Berlin Foreign Ministers' conference of 1954, the German issue was once again in the spotlight. It was a Four-Power meeting, but documents show that some attempts were made by public figures from other states, including Sweden, to somehow influence the positions of the participants. As an example, one may quote the 'strictly confidential notes by (Gunnar) Myrdal concerning statements at the impending Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Four Great Powers on January 6, 1954' sent by the Deputy Executive Secretary of the European Economic Commission, M. Burinskii, to Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko. In this document, the well-known Swedish politician's views were presented as follows: he, Myrdal, viewed the prospects of the forthcoming Conference 'rather sombrely'; he implored the Soviet side to abstain from getting fixated on the Potsdam Agreement (it 'has long enough been considered a dead letter'); in his opinion, 'groups of experts' working – 'without pressure from the media' – would give better results than the meeting of Ministers; he suggested, as the only real alternative to a stalemate, that the occupational forces in both parts of Germany be sent home, or be reduced by one half or a third.<sup>7</sup> Molotov's proposal for a massive pull-out of forces, with 'limited contingents' left in place, may, in this context, be considered a sort of reaction to Myrdal's idea.

The Soviet initiative did not impress the Western ministers. Nor did other proposals, which appeared to break Soviet taboos (the more posi-

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<sup>7</sup> AVP RF, f. 082, op. 42, d. 35, l. 287.

tive, or at least less negative, attitude to US and Canadian participation in the prospective European security pact and NATO), make the Westerners reciprocate in kind. Rather, the Westerners held on to their extremely rigid position. The Soviet concessions did not meet a positive response, nor did they yield results.

Interestingly, Molotov's speeches at the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the Conference, on 15 and 17 February, in which he came the closest to revising the old Soviet positions including those that he himself had expressed at the former sessions, were published neither in Soviet media nor even in the official, semi-secret volume of 'Documents and Protocols' of the Berlin Conference. In his report on the Berlin conference, presented to the March ('Virgin Lands') Plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Molotov also chose not to mention the innovations he had made. One cause of this act of self-censorship may have been his fear that someone in the party leadership would call him too 'soft'. Who might this 'someone' be? Malenkov? Hardly: at a later date, he himself was to make his (from an orthodox, Marxist-Leninist point of view) heretical statement about thermonuclear war meaning the 'end of human civilisation'. We are, accordingly, once again led to zero in on Khrushchev as the era's primary opponent to conservative ideas. After all, it was he who led the attack on Malenkov's 'deviation' in January 1955, which resulted in latter's demotion.

Two points may be in need of clarification here. First, why did Molotov not support Malenkov? He himself expressed unorthodox views, so why did he join Khrushchev in denouncing Malenkov? Was it cowardice? Or was it adherence to 'party discipline'? The question is still to be answered. Second, if Khrushchev opposed all 'heresies', why did he not disapprove of the idea of the Soviet Union joining NATO that was made public on 1 April 1954? He even gave it positive mention during talks with Eisenhower at the Geneva summit of 1955?<sup>8</sup> The most plausible explanation may be that he considered the initiative a purely propagandistic trick. However, an analysis of the preparatory work done in the Foreign Ministry, where the idea originated, essentially as a development of Molotov's remarks at the Berlin conference, leads to the conclusion that both propagandistic and political effects were expected.

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<sup>8</sup> W. Taubman, *Khrushchev. The Man and His Era*, London, Free Press, 2003, p. 350.



## Khrushchev, not Molotov, as the Cold Warrior?

Arguments for Molotov being a 'conservative' Cold Warrior and Khrushchev being a passionate proponent of *détente* have traditionally been construed on the basis of evidence concerning their respective attitudes to the issues that came to fruition in 1955: first, i.e. the abrogation of the war-time Treaties with Great Britain and France; further the conclusion of a State Treaty with Austria, and finally, the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Still, this conventional wisdom comes with some qualifications.

First, there is no evidence that Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov decided to abrogate the Soviet-British and Soviet-French Treaties, alternatively that such a decision met with opposition from other members of the Soviet leadership. Incidentally, Dmitrii Shepilov, Khrushchev's favourite at the time, made a fiery speech against Soviet's former allies. One year later, Shepilov replaced Molotov as Foreign Minister.

The case of the Austrian Treaty seems much clearer: Molotov himself admitted that he had opposed its speedy conclusion and that, in doing so, he had made a mistake. His motives, however, are far from clear. If they were dictated by the wish to use the Austrian question as leverage to facilitate a solution to the German question by combining both in a package deal, they could not possibly be defined as unduly conservative or aggressive. The fact that Molotov opposed GDR's membership in the Warsaw Pact might support this interpretation. Khrushchev, on the other hand, advocated such membership (Khrushchev documented this controversy in his memoirs).<sup>9</sup> One may say that Molotov's gambit betrayed a lack of political foresight and tactical finesse. The same could be said, however, of many people – from Kurt Schumacher and Gustav Heinemann, in connection with their struggle against German rearmament, to Winston Churchill, when he gave his 'Locarno speech'. Their opponents – Adenauer in Germany and the Foreign Office representatives in the United Kingdom, might be considered realists, but hardly *détente* advocates, nor did they ever pretend to be – as did Khrushchev. Still, his approval of the Austrian Treaty

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<sup>9</sup> N. S. Khrushchev. *Vremya. Lyudi. Vlast'. Vospominaniya v 4 knigakh* (Time. People. Power. Reminiscences), 4 vols, Moscow: Moskovskie novosti, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 479–480.

was predicated on the condition that the rest of Europe be firmly embedded in the two opposing blocs, with Germany permanently divided. It was the attitude of a typical Cold Warrior.

In his speech at the July (1957) Plenum, where the 'Anti-Party Group' was denounced, the new Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, accused Molotov of opposing the establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany and hailed Khrushchev as the originator of this move. Molotov rejected Gromyko's claim, arguing that he, too, was in favour of a normalisation of the relations. Gromyko's renewed attempts to buttress his position did not sound very convincing, and even less so his triumphant description of the salutary effects of the Soviet move: 'We obtained the strongest leverage to influence the internal situation in the Federal Republic. Without it, the Bundeswehr would be equipped, perhaps, with atomic weapons. The plans to develop the West German army were foiled, owing to our providing the West German Social-Democratic opposition with strong arguments').

Oleg Troyanovskii, who worked in the Foreign Minister's Secretariat before accepting a position as Khrushchev's aide, mentions an episode that is relevant to the assessment of Khrushchev's and Molotov's personal positions on the German question in 1955. The story runs as follows: 'When a recess was called at the (Geneva) Conference (of the Foreign Ministers), Molotov and Gromyko went to see Khrushchev, who was vacationing in the Crimea... On the way I learned from their conversation that they were bringing with them some important proposals, which, if approved, could result in a successful outcome of the conference. After their talk with Khrushchev, both reappeared in a depressed and angry mood. As a consequence, the (Foreign) Ministers' Conference turned out to be as fruitless as the preceding summit'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Khrushchev's management of the Berlin crisis – planned or spontaneous behaviour?**

One of the most intriguing and controversial chapters in the history of Khrushchev's foreign policy is his management of the Berlin crisis. On 10 November 1958, Khrushchev gave a speech at the meeting of The

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<sup>10</sup> Oleg A. Troyanovskii, *Cherez gody i rasstoyaniya* (Through Times and Distances), Moscow, 1997, p. 190.

Soviet-Polish friendship Society which marked the beginning of this crisis. Modern historiography tends to interpret the motives behind Khrushchev's speech as largely defensive and reactive, as having their roots in his uneasiness about events beyond his control. To quote William Taubman: 'Khrushchev had plenty of reasons to act. East Germany was lagging behind West Germany's economic miracle; many skilled workers and professionals were fleeing to the West through Berlin. West Berlin was also a source of ideological contamination and political subversion, and a potential base for nuclear weapons. That fall, the East German leader Walter Ulbricht repeatedly complained that Moscow wasn't doing enough to keep nuclear weapons out of West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's hands. But Khrushchev did not think through his plan, nor did he fully consult others who might have'.<sup>11</sup> Quotations from cables from Llewellyn Thompson, the US Ambassador in the USSR, and from the memoirs of Troyanovskii (characteristically, the two basically coincide) serve to confirm these theses.<sup>12</sup> Besides the 'German-oriented' concerns, Taubman also highlights 'US-oriented' ones: 'Khrushchev's Berlin ultimatum was a way of getting Eisenhower to the table'.<sup>13</sup> This account of Khrushchev's motives is well founded and generally convincing.

This is far from being the whole story, however. Blank spots and question marks still remain. Among these is the problem of priorities. To put it bluntly, what concerned Khrushchev most – the nuclearisation of West Germany, Soviet Union's inferior position vis-à-vis the USA, the grievances of 'friends' in East Germany or the flight of East Germans to the West?

The sketchy transcript of the discussion of 'Considerations in regard to Germany' at the meeting of the Soviet Communist Party Presidium on 6 November 1958, quotes Khrushchev as saying '(They) pressed (West) Germany into NATO, are giving (the country) nuclear weapons'. This appears to confirm the 'nuclear motive' as paramount, all the more so since no other issue was mentioned. It is, however, not easy to see how the abrogation of the Potsdam agreement (even on a limited scale) – the main point in Khrushchev's deliberations – could possibly

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<sup>11</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 398.

<sup>12</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, pp. 399–400.

<sup>13</sup> Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 403.

prevent the Western powers from making good their postulated plans. While most of the Presidium's members did not dispute the First Secretary's logic, there was one who did. This was Anastas Mikoyan. His thoughts were jotted down as follows:

'On the transfer of legal rights – correct. To what point should we go? There will be a talk that Khrushchev has said of the status quo. I have doubts. Should it be mentioned in the speech of 10 November 1958? (They) will accuse us of putting some heat into the situation; maybe to come after the elections in the FRG?'

Making allowance for the garbled language and some mistakes in the written version (the election referred to is supposedly the one that was to take place in West Berlin in December 1958), Mikoyan's argumentation was quite to-the-point, and it dealt a devastating blow to Khrushchev's plan. Indeed, the latter was bringing such a drastic and aggressive change to the status quo that a more aggressive nuclear posture on part of the Western powers would seem quite probable. So it happened: in the wake of the Berlin crisis, not only was the US allowed to deploy middle-range missiles on West German territory, which was something that Adenauer had earlier opposed, but the Bundeswehr also came the closest it had been to possessing atomic warheads. So, if Khrushchev, with his Berlin gambit, aimed at preventing this sort of development, his plan was worse than 'not thought through' – it was sheer madness. Khrushchev's actions are all the more incomprehensible as he had 'fully consulted' those who knew better.

But was the nuclear issue really Khrushchev's primary concern? At a press conference on 17 November 1958, a correspondent from Reuter asked whether 'the policy of the Soviet government will change if West Germany gives up her rearmament program'. Khrushchev replied categorically: 'No, it will not change'. Press conferences are, of course, not the proper venue for disclosing positions that are reserved for negotiation, but this statement alone was to destroy the whole edifice of Soviet propaganda about the 'nuclear threat' from the West.

Did Khrushchev provoke the Berlin crisis just to achieve some advantages in his relationship with the US and its allies? His well-known definition of West Berlin as 'testicles' or, less obscenely, the 'blister on the American foot' makes it clear that he well knew the weakness of the Western position in West Berlin. In fact, it was weak geographi-

cally as well as legally, as was recognised by Western politicians.<sup>14</sup> This weakness could be employed to extract concessions from his Cold War adversaries. What kind of concessions? A Russian writer, in a recent essay, formulated his answer to this question most elegantly: 'to make them more amenable on the issue of the unification of Germany'.<sup>15</sup> The invitation of the East German Foreign Minister to the Geneva Conference – on equal terms with his West German counterpart – and of the Soviet leader to the USA were signs that the Western powers did become 'more amenable'. Symbolically, at least, some parity vis-à-vis the West was achieved in 1959 as well. Could more be squeezed out of them? On 4 August 1961, in an address to the leaders of the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev expressed himself most bluntly on this point: 'The peace treaty (the project that since the beginning of 1959 had supplemented and largely supplanted the original proposal on West Berlin in Soviet diplomacy) legalises this division (of Germany). Therefore it weakens the West, and they certainly will not go for it'. This confession notwithstanding, the Soviet side continued to 'add heat' to the international situation. For what purpose?

American scholar Hope Harrison offers a 'the tail wags the dog' explanation of the Berlin crisis: according to her, it was Ulbricht who – by hook and crook – made Khrushchev bow to his wishes and demands, among which the Berlin Wall topped the list. It is true that the SED boss welcomed Khrushchev's repudiation of the more cautious approach to the Berlin issue advocated by the Soviet diplomatic community, and Khrushchev's bold (or, to put it bluntly, provocative) initiative of November 1958. But this does not mean that Khrushchev acted on Ulbricht's advice. At least, there is no evidence of this.

Moreover, an analysis of the positions held by the two leaders at the aforementioned meeting of the Warsaw Pact gives reasons to conclude that Ulbricht, while mentioning the closure of the border in Berlin, meant it as a measure to be carried out *after* the 'peace treaty' had been signed, whereas Khrushchev preferred it the other way around; or more accurately, he considered the hermetisation of East Germany the ultimate goal

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<sup>14</sup> For relevant remarks by American president Dwight Eisenhower, see Taubman, *Khrushchev*, pp. 397–398.

<sup>15</sup> F. I. Novik, 'SSSR i nachalo berlinskogo krizisa v 1958 godu' (The USSR and the Beginnings of the Berlin Crisis in 1958), *Rossiia i Germania*, vol. 3. Moscow, 2004, p. 334.

of his German policy, thus making sure that the peace treaty could be nothing more than a propaganda stunt. If, from the very beginning of the Berlin crisis, this was Khrushchev's goal, then the image of him as a feather-brained and mostly improvising politician is not justified.

Sure, serious objections can be raised against the idea of a long-planned 'Wall' decision being the rationale behind Khrushchev's erratic diplomacy in the Berlin crisis after 10 November 1958. It is true that Khrushchev, in his memoirs, conceded his authorship of the plan that took effect on 13 August 1961, but described it as a reaction to the East German leader's insolent plea that he supply a work force from the USSR to keep the GDR's failing economy afloat. No date was given for this plea, but in the context, it could not have been received earlier than the March meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Committee. It was Ulbricht who there introduced the idea of cutting off civil traffic between the two parts of Berlin on March 1961 – only to invoke the wrath of the Soviet leader. Even on 4 August 1961, Khrushchev spoke of the 'open city of Berlin' (and characteristically offered 100,000 Soviet workers to help the 'friends' in East Germany – something he, in his memoirs, describes as an 'affront').

Still, there are plausible explanations for Khrushchev's obvious reluctance to speak out in favour of the 'Wall option'. Proper timing and secrecy were essential conditions for the plan's success. Loud verbiage about the 'free city' and 'peace treaty' constituted an appropriate smoke screen that could mislead the world, USSR's own allies included, and prepare it to accept the erection of the Wall as a 'lesser evil' and a basically defensive, if not wholly justifiable act. Indeed, in 1958, the erection of the Wall would, in all probability, have evoked a far more negative, and perhaps even material, reaction. One must keep in mind that, from a Communist ideological, as well as practical point of view, the existence of a border that was open to the 'capitalist' world, even represented by an isolated island, as in the case of West Berlin, was a deplorable anomaly that could not be tolerated indefinitely. The problem was to 'sell' the lowering of the Iron Curtain in Berlin to a global, as well as a Soviet public opinion, and to minimise the risks and costs. In this respect Khrushchev's calculations and actions may be considered quite rational and effective.

## The peace treaty that never was to be realized

The Berlin crisis would come to an end with the erection of the Berlin Wall, unless another ‘mini-crisis’ should erupt in its wake, in the relationship between the USSR and East Germany. Ulbricht felt cheated: Khrushchev had failed to deliver on his promise of what Ulbricht wanted most of all: the conclusion of a peace treaty that would give the GDR full sovereignty – at least on a par with other states in the socialist community. The public was, to a large degree, kept in darkness about the conflict, but this did not diminish its actual scope, or the dangers it entailed for international peace. The tank standoff at ‘Checkpoint Charlie’ was an example of how the East German authorities could, at will, provoke a most serious confrontation between the Great Powers. In this case the role of the hard-liners in the Western camp, like Lucius Clay, should not be underestimated, of course.

Khrushchev employed various means to pacify Ulbricht. In one instance, he used open reproach, bordering on rudeness: ‘What drives us towards the peace treaty? Shall we be choked without it? No. In 1958 and before 13 August the matter was bad. Now Ulbricht has built the wall and laughs at the Americans. And they are forced to tolerate it...Isn’t that enough for you? You are a robber!’<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, he assured his ‘friend’ that the treaty would be signed in due course – as soon as the Soviet Union had acquired a sufficient number of the intercontinental missiles.<sup>17</sup> Whether he meant this seriously is an open question.

In the end, the East German leader declared himself willing to make do with the conclusion of a bilateral Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union. The address delivered by Khrushchev turned out to be his last word on Germany. It was conspicuous, not only because of its routine invectives against the West German ‘revanchists’, but also by delivering a sudden blow to the prestige of the East German allies. His curious statement that the ‘principles of self-determination are not applicable to the German question’<sup>18</sup> reflected, as may be surmised, his deep disaffection with the Germans in general – ‘friends’ and foes alike. It is no

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<sup>16</sup> A. A. Fursenko, ‘Kak byla postroena berlinskaya stena’ (How the Berlin Wall was built), *Istoricheskiiye zapiski*, no. 4 (122), Moscow, 2001, p. 88. The author does not specify the precise date of this conversation, noting that it took place ‘in the end of February 1962’.

<sup>17</sup> Fursenko, *Kak byla postroena*, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> Pravda, 13 June, 1964.

wonder that they were both stung. The East German analysts disclosed their resentment in a secret memorandum to Ulbricht and, of course, only after Khrushchev's demise. Khrushchev obviously had not chosen the best way to address the German question. His playing of the 'West German card' was more wisely planned, like sending his son-in-law, the well-known Soviet journalist Aleksei Adzhubei to Bonn in 1964 to talk to Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and other important persons. The trip did not bring about any breakthrough, but it opened some venues for useful contacts that might possibly do so. The October coup that toppled Khrushchev put a stop to this development for years to come.





## Chapter 4

# Soviet Views on Sweden's Neutrality and Foreign Policy, 1945–50<sup>1</sup>

*Maxim Korobochkin*

### General context

To USSR foreign policy in general and to its relations to the Nordic countries in particular, the period from 1945 to 1950 was crucial. The Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in May 1945 finalised the transformation of the country's power status. From being a great power, the Soviet Union turned into a superpower, with the broader range of interests and ambitions that came with this new status (something the Soviet leaders probably did not fully realise at the time). In the same period of time, the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in 1950 augured the darkest hour of the Cold War, which had taken the place of wartime cooperation and friendly alliance. As far as Soviet diplomatic aims and activities were concerned, the Nordic region was probably not of the highest priority, but it was certainly important, especially in consideration of the importance Moscow's top-ranking policymakers set on relations with neighbouring states, 'spheres of influence', and their concern about potential, hostile bridgeheads at the country's borders.

Not surprisingly, the relationship with Finland was high priority in Moscow, both because of the country's strategic geographical position, close to the Leningrad region, and because of recent wartime experiences; finally, Finland's close alliance with the defeated Nazi Germany left it

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of a research project on Soviet-Swedish relations 1945–1950, which was arranged in cooperation with Professor Karl Molin from the Institute of Contemporary History at Södertörn University. I would like to thank Karl Molin for his cooperation and assistance, the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies for its financial support of the project, Dr. Sven Holtsmark from the Norwegian Defence Studies Institute and Dr. Alexei Komarov from the Institute of World History for their help in locating relevant material and their readiness to share their own archival findings with me, and the staff of the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation and the Russian State Archive on Social and Political History.

open to pressure from the Soviet side. In the late 1940s, Soviet-Finnish relations went through a momentous development, and the Soviet Union spared no effort to exert great pressure on its neighbour in order to attain its objectives of assuring its own security while exerting maximum influence over Finland's politics. Norway shared a border with the USSR and controlled the sea route from the Arctic Sea to the Atlantic, the strategic importance of which had been demonstrated clearly during World War II. Norway was therefore also top priority in Soviet diplomacy. Soviet policies vis-à-vis Norway, however, differed significantly from those towards Finland. Excepting a short but significant period, stretching from late 1944 to 1945, when the Soviet Union demanded dominion over Svalbard and the Foreign Commissariat proposed to make territorial demands in the high North, Soviet policies towards Norway might be said to consist of extensive and ambitious planning combined with comparatively little in the way of practical efforts or results. Moscow simply lacked the necessary leverage in Norway, and as Norway was considered a part of the Western sphere of influence one was wary of increasing East-West tension by taking radical steps.

Compared to the Soviet relations with both Finland and Norway, the relations with Sweden appeared to consist of more or less routine day-to-day diplomatic activity, unmarred by open disputes or dramatic conflicts. This does not, however, mean that Sweden and its policy were unimportant in Soviet eyes. Sweden, an island of prosperity in the devastated post-war Europe, a country whose economic and military potential enabled it, at least temporarily, to play the role of a regional great power, certainly attracted considerable attention in Moscow, and this attention was not always benevolent.

There were times when Soviet policies towards Sweden were determined by specific factors (actions taken or not taken by the Swedish government), but by and large, the Soviet attitude to Sweden was part of a more general conceptual framework. Of particular importance was Stalin's and his collaborators' traditional aversion to Social Democracy and Soviet distrust of Sweden's claimed neutrality, a distrust that Sweden's position during World War II had intensified.<sup>2</sup> Seen in this

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<sup>2</sup> Sweden's concessions to Germany during World War II were regarded with considerable anxiety by the Soviets. In 1941–42, at least, it seems that a possibility of Sweden's participation in the war on Germany's side was taken quite seriously in Moscow, generating

light, Sweden's foreign policy, as well as the country's active search for a 'third way' between 'bourgeois capitalism and communism' would inevitably seem suspect.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet Union was also suspicious of the idea of a neutral Scandinavian bloc promoted by post-war Swedish diplomacy, and of Nordic cooperation in general, which they perceived as yet another anti-Soviet scheme. On the other hand, in Moscow's view, Sweden's desire to maintain a balance vis-à-vis the great power blocs provided an opportunity to counter 'Anglo-Saxon influence' in that country. Moscow never saw this as an opportunity to include Sweden in the Soviet sphere of influence, however. As in the case of Norway, one feared that radical political action on the part of Moscow might push the country into the Western camp. This fear was even more pronounced where Sweden was concerned, and had a moderating impact on Soviet policy-making concerning the country.

## Sources

This article is based primarily on documents found in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (*Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii*), which holds a collection of Soviet Foreign Ministry documents. I have, in particular, made use of the *fond* (collection) of the *referentura* (desk) on Sweden, which was part of the Foreign Commissariat/Ministry's Fifth European Department and was responsible for the Nordic 'direction' during that period. All information gathered by the Mission/Embassy in Stockholm was collected in this Department, whose task it was to produce analytical documentation for the top-level officials (for the Commissar/Minister himself and for those

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Considerable fear and concern. Even Aleksandra Kollontai, who could hardly be suspected of being biased against Sweden, listed her efforts to prevent Sweden's entry into the war among her greatest diplomatic achievements, together with the armistice negotiations with Finland in 1940 and 1944. See: Kollontai's draft memoirs on her war years in Sweden, RGASPI, f. 134 (Kollontai's papers), op. 3, d. 27.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that, in the late 1940s, similar suspicions were shared by the other superpower, the United States, especially when East-West relations started to deteriorate. The Americans put pressure on Sweden to make it 'stand up and be counted' on the Western side, to use the expression of US Ambassador to Stockholm, H. Freeman Matthews -. For details see: G. Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia and the Cold War, 1945–1949*. Oslo, Univ.-forl., cop. 1980; C. Silva, *Keep Them Strong, Keep Them Friendly. Swedish-American Relations and the Pax Americana, 1948–1952*. Stockholm: Univ., 1999.

of his deputies who monitored the Nordic region). Together with the Embassy, this Department constituted the principal body for evaluating information about Sweden and for submitting policy-planning proposals. In his memoirs, A. M. Aleksandrov, who served in the Stockholm Mission as well as in the Fifth European Department before he made an outstanding career as Brezhnev's personal assistant – gave a rather unflattering account of the Department's role, describing it as a 'stagnant bureaucratic swamp' where officials were mostly making many old documents breed new ones. In my opinion, this description is somewhat unfair. After Aleksandrov's term in Stockholm, which had been full of activities, contacts and events, he probably found it rather dull to be assigned to bureaucratic desk-work in Moscow. But, as I will try to show, the Department did indeed play a significant role in generating ideas and informing practical policies towards the Nordic countries in general and Sweden in particular, even though Stalin's and Molotov's bureaucratic system left little room for initiatives from low- or mid-ranking diplomats (be they situated in the Embassies or in the Ministry). The bulk of the evaluations and proposals were produced on the request of some superior (usually an oral request, and therefore not reflected in the documents), or prepared 'for the file' in accordance with standard procedures of the ministry. The contents of the documents probably reflected the superiors' views, as perceived by the subordinates, to a greater degree than the views of those subordinates themselves. Stalin personally of course, took the final decisions at the top level of the Ministry, or, in some cases, at the very highest level.

Other important sources are the Ministers' (Molotov's and Vyshinskii's) archives, and those of the Vice Ministers who were supervising the Fifth European Department. I gained access not only to material submitted for their approval, but also to records of their conversations with foreign diplomats stationed in Moscow.

In the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii*), RGASPI, the files of the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Soviet Union are kept. Here I found, among other things, Aleksandra Kollontai's unpublished memoirs from the time she was stationed in Stockholm, during World War II. I have, unfortunately, not managed to get access to all the relevant evidence from the period in question. There

are wide gaps in the material, especially with regard to day-to-day diplomatic intercourse and the specific problems that arose between the USSR and Sweden during the period, e.g. the Wallenberg case, the Baltic refugee problem etc. Still, in my opinion, the available sources do give an adequate picture of the general Soviet attitude and policy towards Sweden, and of the principal policy-planning proposals and decisions made in Moscow.

## 1945: Euphoria

In late 1944 and early 1945, Soviet diplomacy was facing the task of articulating a position towards Sweden within a new framework – the post-war international order as conceived by the Soviet Union. There had been a period of serious concern that Sweden might enter the war on the side of Germany, a period when ‘it was necessary to work in such a manner, as to deprive hostile forces in Sweden of any opportunity to find a pretext to break off relations with us’.<sup>4</sup> But this was now in the past. The spring and summer of 1944 had seen a certain rapprochement between the two countries, grounded in common political and economic interests. At that time, Sweden had made large-scale proposals for mutual trade after the war and had helped bring about an armistice with Finland. This rapprochement had not survived the last triumphant months of the war, however.

A new era was approaching: Soviet post-war foreign policy planning and practice – in Northern Europe as well as in other regions – was without a doubt influenced by the euphoria that characterises a victorious country that is in the process of realising its new status as a acknowledged great power, equal to Britain and the USA, a country which, together with these two powers, was to define the destiny of the world, and which was determined to get its ‘legitimate’ share of territorial, political and economic gains – in accordance with its war effort and sacrifices.

This background, and the wartime image of Sweden as a country ‘helping the enemy’ to a large extent shaped the idea of how future relations between the two countries should be. Briefly, Moscow saw the

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<sup>4</sup> Kollontai's manuscript ‘The reduction of the three fronts during the war, 1940–1945’, RGASPI, f. 134, op. 3, d. 77, l. 5.

future as follows. Moscow had no territorial claims on Sweden, nor did it plan to include the country in the emerging Soviet sphere of influence in Europe. In its opinion, however, the Swedes had greater need for good bilateral relations than did the Soviets. Therefore, Stockholm would have to obtain Soviet goodwill by 'repenting' of its wartime policy, and by making concessions in those areas where political and economic disagreements immediately arose between the two countries, now that they were no longer separated by the World War II battle lines.

This view was reflected in the analytical documents prepared by party leaders and diplomatic institutions, as well as in practical steps taken in Soviet policies towards Sweden. For instance, in a memo about members of the Swedish government, written by the VKP (b)<sup>5</sup> CC International Department in January 1945, Prime Minister Hansson was characterised as 'the leader of the Social Democratic Party's right wing' – a quite negative assessment, given the ideological views of the Soviet Union – and his wartime policy 'was defined by a desire to keep Sweden out of the war at any price.' Moreover, 'he thinks that it was the right kind of policy, and does not admit to have made mistakes...' The verdict on the other architect of Sweden's wartime foreign policy, Foreign Minister Günther, was even less flattering: 'During the war, his policy was marked by obedience and servility towards the Germans'.<sup>6</sup> The diplomats had a similar view of the Swedish establishment: in July 1945 – clearly on Moscow's request – the Soviet Mission in Stockholm wrote special memos on fascism in Sweden and the Swedish authorities' wartime collaboration with the Gestapo and German intelligence. The authors, Charge d'affairs Ilya S. Chernyshev and Attaché Andrei M. Aleksandrov, emphasised that 'Sweden is infested with fascists from top to bottom', the 'state apparatus' is full of 'fascists in disguise and persons who, in the first years of the war, had revealed themselves as one hundred percent time-servers, ready to serve the 'New Order' loyally'. The demands from Swedish 'progressive' circles that a 'radical cleansing' of the country's fascist element is carried out 'have so far been suppressed successfully by the government'. According to the authors, certain cabi-

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<sup>5</sup> *Vsesoiuznaya Kommunisticheskaya Partiya (bolshevikov)* (All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)) was the official title of the CPSU before 1952.

<sup>6</sup> 'Personal data on certain members of the Swedish government', submitted to G. Dimitrov on 21 January 1945, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 813, ll. 2–3.

net members' involvement in collaboration with the Nazis 'reflects the pro-Hitlerite policy of the entire Swedish government during the war'. Practical steps were envisaged in this connection: to assist an anti-fascist 'cleansing' in Sweden by organising 'several strong and concrete publications in the Soviet press'. This proposal, however, was apparently turned down in Moscow: in the document containing the message, the relevant paragraph has been crossed out.<sup>7</sup>

At approximately the same time, another set of proposals, of a more far-reaching character, to press the Swedish government to 'make amends' for its wartime policies, was undertaken in Moscow. On the basis of documents gathered for the trial of 'war culprits' in Finland, M. S. Vetrov, acting head of the Foreign Commissariat's Fifth European (Scandinavian) Department, submitted a memo to Vice Commissar S. A. Lozovskii in which he suggested that one 'condemn' the Swedish government for its violations of its neutrality – this idea was probably borrowed from similar wartime proposals made by the Norwegian exile government.<sup>8</sup> The collected evidence, he argued, 'serves as a documentary confirmation of Sweden's assistance to Germany and Finland in their war against the USSR'<sup>9</sup> and 'can be used as a basis for deciding on the line one should take towards Sweden at the forthcoming meeting between I.V. Stalin, Truman and Churchill'.<sup>10</sup> Another document, written two days later by Vetrov and his subordinate I. Sysoev, was more specific with regard to the measures to be taken against Sweden: 'these actions on part of the Swedish government should be condemned in a special declaration, and Sweden's responsibility for the damage its

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<sup>7</sup> Memo by I. S. Chernyshev and A. M. Aleksandrov 'The collaboration of Swedish government bodies with the Gestapo and the work of Hitlerite agents in Sweden', 13 July 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. (papka – folder) 132, d. 33, ll. 102–103, 118. This memo was no exception: two other documents on 'fascism in Sweden' were submitted by the Mission in May and October 1945, revealing Moscow's focus on the topic (See *ibid.*, ll. 11–25; 195–210).

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, memo by N. D. Kuznetsov, first secretary of the Soviet Embassy to the allied governments in London, on the foreign policy of the Norwegian government in exile, November 1943, in Sven G. Holtsmark (ed.), *Norge og Sovjetunionen 1917–1955. En utenrikspolitisk dokumentasjon*, Oslo: Cappelen, 1995, doc. 253.

<sup>9</sup> Vetrov's memo to Lozovskii, 30 June 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. 131, d. 30, l. 3. In the draft, the wording was even stronger: Sweden was accused of 'complicity' in Germany's and Finland's war against the Soviet Union.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



actions inflicted on the United Nations during World War II should be determined.<sup>11</sup> No action was taken on these proposals either. The reason was probably, in both cases, that a change of Cabinet was about to take place in Sweden, and it made little sense to hold the new Cabinet responsible for the policies of its predecessor.

These evaluations and plans were, of course, not guided solely by Moscow's desire to 'punish' Sweden for its concessions to Germany during the war. To some extent, Moscow's attitude reflected the kind of moral superiority that a victorious power enjoys vis-à-vis a neutral nation with a 'dubious' record. Moscow also pursued a more practical goal – of making Sweden 'recognise' the USSR's new, much stronger, position in the region and compel it to give concessions on practical issues that caused dispute between the two countries: the Soviet demand to have the Baltic refugees extradited, as well as soldiers of all nationalities who had been fighting for Germany and who had escaped to Sweden during the last months of the war, the return of the refugees' boats and the Finnish ships interned in Sweden etc.

Apart from the moral and political pressure, which, in fact, was never really put to use, Moscow considered employing economic leverage as well. According to the Foreign Commissariat's evaluation, allied pressure had forced Sweden to terminate its trade with Germany. It was cut off from its overseas markets. As a result, by the end of the war, the country would 'find itself in a factual position of isolation with respect to foreign trade'. It would, in the first post-war years, 'face serious economic problems, especially with respect to markets' and the supply of raw materials. Finally it would be faced with competition from the US. Under these circumstances, Stockholm was supposed to be extremely interested in establishing large-scale trade relations with the USSR.<sup>12</sup> This evaluation was made in early February 1945, but it probably reflected the thinking that had informed the Soviet position in the previous months, when the Swedish offer of a 1 billion *Kroner* loan had

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<sup>11</sup> Vetrov's and Sysoyev's memo to Deputy Commissars of Foreign Affairs, A.Ya. Vyshinskii and S.A. Lozovskii, 'On the condemnation of the Swedish government and on its responsibility for the violations of neutrality in favour of Germany and Finland', 2 July 1945, *Ibid.*, ll. 4–6.

<sup>12</sup> Summary of V.S. Semyonov's review 'On Sweden's economic situation and its perspectives', 6 February 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. 130, d. 5, ll. 1. 2–5.

caused disputes that, among other things, had led to a conflict between the veteran Soviet Ambassador Aleksandra Kollontai, and her superiors at the Foreign Commissariat. Since October 1944, Kollontai had been trying actively to persuade her superiors to accept the proposal 'for political reasons'. She apparently thought it would be instrumental in improving relations between the two countries. Moscow, however, took a different stance. On 23 December, Vice Foreign Commissar V. G. Dekanozov and Foreign Trade Commissar A. I. Mikoyan instructed the Ambassador to tell the Swedes 'that their proposal ... is of no interest for us'. They informed her, confidentially, that the Soviet side was dissatisfied with the terms of the proposed loan, and that it furthermore was in a position to choose, as it had received more attractive proposals from the US.<sup>13</sup> However, as soon became clear, the primary cause of this negative attitude was not economic considerations. When Kollontai, who was determined to close the deal with the Swedes and was taking pains not to give the impression that the Soviets were turning down the proposal for political reasons, informed the Swedish Minister of Finance, Wigforss, of Dekanozov's reasons for turning down the loan, a real storm broke out in Moscow. Kollontai was censored for 'deviating' from her instructions. Kollontai's former second in command at the Stockholm Embassy and M.S. Vetrov wrote to Dekanozov, that through her actions 'she weakened the force of our reply. She reduced the issue to the level of simple commerce, without even trying to use our reply to further our political interests.' 'In a situation where Swedish industrialists are keenly interested in trading with us ...and put pressure on the Swedish Foreign Ministry, it was possible to get serious concessions from the Swedish government by aid of this reply, taking advantage of pressure exerted by Swedish industrialists and financiers for this purpose. We have in mind the Baltic issue, the handing over of our POW's and internees, the issue of Finnish ships etc.'<sup>14</sup> It is likely that this incident, added to Kollontai's record as an excessively independent Ambassador – a serious sin in the eyes of Molotov's Foreign Ministry – together with her advanced age and poor health contributed to her being called home

<sup>13</sup> V. S. Semyonov's and M. S. Vetrov's memo 'On the Swedish proposal of a loan to the USSR and the negotiations on this issue in Stockholm', 12 January 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. 130, d. 16, l. 2.

<sup>14</sup> V. S. Semenov's and M. S. Vetrov's note to Dekanozov, 12 January 1945. Ibid., l. 1.

from Stockholm, which put an end to her long and brilliant diplomatic career.<sup>15</sup>

After the Foreign Commissariat had shelved the idea of a loan, it discussed the employment of other economic levers: V. S. Semyonov, for instance, argued that Sweden's 'vital' interest in Polish coal shipments 'can provide us with an opportunity for exerting serious economic pressure on the Swedes', and Moscow should take 'all the Poles' contracts for coal shipments to the Swedes...under consideration'. This factor, he explained, could be used, among other things, 'to accelerate the Swedes' recognition of the Polish provisional government'.<sup>16</sup>

As the war came to an end, Swedish foreign policy in general, and the country's future political orientation in particular, started to attract more attention in Moscow. On 29 April, Charge d'affaires Chernyshev and Attaché Aleksandrov submitted a memo that highlighted the substantial increase in British influence in Sweden, which had grown since late 1944, as a result of 'deliberate and systematic work' on the part of the British. This influence had lately intensified, as 'Sweden has been faced with the question of determining its future conduct of foreign policy and economic organisation in the context of a new, post-war Europe'. According to the authors, the British were pursuing a triple goal: 'the establishment of Sweden's economic dependence on Great Britain, the expansion of English cultural influence' and, ultimately, 'laying the groundwork for control over Sweden's policy'. Britain (and the USA), they continued, were 'very skilfully' exploiting Sweden's 'practical need to make amends to the victorious powers' for its wartime policies, as well as the country's economic isolation, 'especially as it has so far not been possible to establish commodity exchange with the USSR, as Sweden desires'.

Hansson's government, they argued, was not in complete agreement with the country's pro-British – and, by definition, 'anti-Soviet' – circles, but 'tried, as far as possible... at least on the surface, to stick to a

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<sup>15</sup> According to A. M. Aleksandrov, who served at the Mission in Stockholm during the war, Stalin and Molotov 'did not like her and in fact did not trust her', thinking, in particular, that her sympathy for Sweden biased her judgement. See: A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva. Vospominaniya diplomata* (From Kollontai to Gorbachev. Recollections of a Diplomat), Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994, pp. 36–37.

<sup>16</sup> Summary of Semyonov's memo 'On Sweden's economic situation', AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. 130, d. 5, l. 5.

'middle way', pursuing a policy of 'balance' between the USSR and the Anglo-Saxon countries and using its political and trade relations with the USSR as somewhat of a counterweight to English and American influence, to avoid excessive dependence on the latter'. 'The Swedish "balancing", however, remains purely superficial. Essentially Swedish policy remains deeply anti-Soviet on all the most important issues'. If Sweden was sometimes 'flirting' with the Soviet Union, then this was merely to further the country's economic objectives, or to strengthen Sweden's negotiating position vis-à-vis the Western powers. The authors' general conclusion was that 'Sweden's post-war 'neutrality' will be quite sympathetic towards England and the USA'.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of this 'negative' assessment, it appears that the document had a clear, more sympathetic, undercurrent, especially if we take into account that Chernyshev, one year later, in April 1946, became instrumental in changing the Soviet attitude towards Sweden. Ilya S. Chernyshev, who replaced Kollontai as charge d'affaires and subsequently envoy to Stockholm, proved himself a worthy successor. He was a man of personal integrity,<sup>18</sup> a good and realistic analyst, and he developed a keen interest in Sweden and a desire to work actively to improve Soviet relations with the country. He shared one other quality with his venerable predecessor – the courage and ability to show initiative – and, as had been the case for his predecessor, his numerous proposals got him in trouble with his superiors. It is not unlikely that, in this memo, the two young diplomats – Chernyshev was 33, and Aleksandrov 28 – were developing a line of argument that Chernyshev would be using one year later. They argued for an improvement of relations with Sweden, but, to avoid suspicions of deviating from the official hard line, they did so 'in a

<sup>17</sup> Memo by Chernyshev and Aleksandrov 'The growth and consolidation of English influence in Sweden', 29 April 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. 132, d. 33, ll. 56, 89–90.

<sup>18</sup> In this connection his conversation with the Bulgarian Envoy Iliyev in July 1945 is relevant. When the Bulgarian, telling Chernyshev about the Swedes regretting the departure of Kollontai, remarked that 'excessive praise' for Kollontai by the Swedish press and officials 'is extremely suspicious and creates ... an unpleasant impression', he received an unequivocal answer from Chernyshev: Kollontai had spent fifteen years in Sweden, 'is a very experienced diplomat, popular and respected in Sweden, so it is only natural that the Swedes regret her departure' (AVP RF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 52, d. 854, ll. 5–6). In his memoirs Aleksandrov also mentions that Chernyshev, as a token of appreciation of his help in elaborating documents, was sending the documents to Moscow with two signatures: his own and Aleksandrov's, 'which was quite unusual for Foreign Ministry practices of the time' (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, p. 40).

round-about manner' – claiming that the Soviet unwillingness to meet the Swedes halfway would only lead to a consolidation of Western influence in the country.<sup>19</sup>

The inauguration of a new government in Sweden did not change the Soviet attitude. For one thing, Swedish Communists warned Moscow against expecting too much of the new Cabinet. As Sven Linderot told Chernyshev in June, he was 'not sure that the new government will be able to make a positive change in the present Swedish-Soviet relations. At best, some steps in this direction will be taken, but reactionary Social Democrats will never carry out a radical change of these relations. ... The ruling circles favour the establishment of good, close relations with England and America', and various press statements made by high-ranking Social Democrats, especially Gunnar Myrdal, about the need of 'an objective study of the Soviet Union' were, in fact, 'aimed ... merely at deflecting the Soviet Union's suspicions of Sweden's orientation towards the West'.<sup>20</sup> Even without hearing these dire warnings, Moscow would have had its reasons for concern: the new government had adopted a new line in its approach to Nordic cooperation. This new line, in the Soviets' opinion, was aimed at 'maximum economic, cultural and political subordination of the neighbouring countries ... to Swedish influence' and it was traditionally considered to be 'hostile to Russia and its interests'.<sup>21</sup> Moscow viewed these renewed efforts with suspicion. The Soviet Mission warned that even though the Swedes had suffered a setback with the rejection of their proposals for a 'Nordic bloc' at the Stockholm Nordic Social Democratic conference in July, 'this Swedish line continues, taking, for the time being, the shape of ... 'practical Nordism'. 'This does not entail a deviation from the main aims; on the contrary, in the long run it will contribute to their being reached',<sup>22</sup> and should, therefore, be watched closely.

<sup>19</sup> To support my point of view, I will again refer to Aleksandrov's memoirs: there he mistakenly dates Chernyshev's comprehensive proposals on Soviet-Swedish relations back to 1945, which probably means that they started to take shape then (Aleksandrov-Agentov, p. 41.).

<sup>20</sup> Chernyshev's conversation with Linderot, 22 June 1945, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 52, d. 854, ll. 1–4.

<sup>21</sup> Memo by Chernyshev and Aleksandrov on Swedish policy of 'Nordic cooperation' in the new situation after the end of war in Europe, 28 September 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 31, p. 137, d. 31, ll. 1–2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 15.

In spite of this general opinion that 'both the leadership and the policies (of Sweden) ... remain unchanged',<sup>23</sup> signals of the new government's willingness to reach a Soviet-Swedish rapprochement did not pass unnoticed in Moscow. In October, Vetrov made use of one of these signals – Foreign Minister Undén's speech in the city of Örebro, which the Swedish authorities took pains to send to the Foreign Commissariat – as a means of commenting on the government's policy, and on possible Soviet reactions to these. Undén, he pointed out, 'in a veiled formulation suggests writing off the policy hitherto pursued by the Swedish government ... up until the defeat of Hitler Germany' without 'condemning' it, recognising the Soviet role in preventing a German occupation of Sweden during the war, while reminding (the Soviets) of a similar service rendered by Sweden to the USSR – its refusal to allow the passage of Anglo-French troops during the Winter War. As far as Soviet complaints about Nazi activities in Sweden were concerned, the Foreign Minister rejected them 'with a reference to the Swedish democratic system and legal norms'. 'This', Vetrov concludes, 'is the essence of the new Swedish government's "new" political line ... characterised by an undetermined, half-hearted and hesitant approach.' Even though the expansion of bilateral economic relations, which the Swedes proposed, could be 'rather valuable... from a political point of view', he suggested that the Soviet line 'should be directed at unmasking the indeterminate and half-hearted policy of the Swedish government', through critical articles in the press, for instance. He also presented a list of demands that the Swedish government should meet if it wished to improve its relations with the USSR: 'Sweden should bear responsibility for the policies pursued by the Swedish government during the recent war, and somehow compensate for the consequent damage done to the United Nations' cause and to the Soviet Union in particular', the Swedish government should ban 'the hostile activities of Fascist organisations and undertake a cleansing of the army, police and state apparatus of fascist elements', it should 'immediately stop anti-Soviet propaganda' in the media, return the Baltic refugees 'as soon as possible', and 'assist the Soviet Repatriation Commission in any manner possible'. The nearest future would show, he concluded, whether the Swedish government

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., I. 4.

would be able to ensure a 'real turn-around' in the relations between the two countries.<sup>24</sup>

## **1946–1947: The Turn**

The 'nearest future', however, showed that the Soviet side was also ready for a turn-around, even without far-reaching concessions from the Swedes. As it appears, several factors contributed to this change of policy. By early 1946, relations between the former allies had deteriorated considerably, and 'increased' Anglo-American activities in Sweden were now perceived as an attempt to turn the country into 'a military bridge-head in the future war'.<sup>25</sup> Nordic cooperation was also developing successfully, which provoked growing anxiety in Moscow: in January 1946, the new head of the Fifth European Department, Aleksandr N. Abramov, a diplomat who was generally relatively flexible and pragmatic, came to the rather alarmist conclusion that a Nordic bloc, aided by the practical military collaboration of the USA and Britain, and 'undoubtedly oriented against the Soviet Union' had already been 'de facto created'.<sup>26</sup> One had to take action to oppose this kind of development, but the 'hard' attitude towards Sweden, which had been practiced in 1945, had not brought tangible results. The policy of ignoring Sweden's feelers for an improved relationship, complemented by insistence that it make concessions on practical issues, was leading nowhere. As a matter of fact, Soviet diplomacy could so far boast of only one success: the return of the Baltic refugees' boats. The Soviet rejection of Swedish trade proposals had not seriously affected the country's relatively strong economy; rather, it had resulted only in the expansion Sweden's exchange with Soviet's rivals – the Western powers.

On the other hand, the change in Soviet attitudes to Sweden reflected a broader tendency. The Soviet Union's 'diplomatic offensive', launched in late 1944, had shown little success by the spring of 1946. Moscow's territorial claims, from Svalbard to the Turkish Straits and

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<sup>24</sup> Vetrov's memo to Dekanozov, 18 October 1945, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 30, p. 129, d. 6, ll. 73–76.

<sup>25</sup> Abramov's letter to K.V. Novikov, member of the Foreign Ministry Collegium, 1 March 1946, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 31, p. 133, d. 5, l. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Abramov's letter to Novikov, 11 January 1946, AVP RF, f. 0116 (the Norwegian desk), op. 28, p. 130, d. 11, l. 2.

Libya, had been rejected or were about to be so, the great expectations of greater Soviet influence had in most cases come to naught – except in the USSR's immediate 'sphere of interest', Eastern Europe. The Soviet leadership realised that its options were limited, something it had forgotten in the euphoria of victory, and 1946 witnessed a general softening of Soviet policy in various regions and on various issues.

However, in order to get a large mechanism going, one needs to give it a push – and the Soviet diplomatic system certainly was a very large mechanism. In the case of Sweden, Chernyshev's initiative and ability to act independently, without orders from the top, served as such a push. In February 1946, in a memo to Molotov,<sup>27</sup> he presented a large-scale program aimed at a rapprochement between the USSR and Sweden and a general expansion of Soviet activities in that country. He suggested, among other things, that the Soviet Union refrain from insisting on the return of the Baltic refugees. This he saw as a prerequisite for the improvement of relations between the two countries. He also suggested that the Soviet Union support the Swedish request for membership in the UN, that it supply Sweden with coal, that it accept Sweden's proposal for a billion *Kroner* loan, that it establish a direct airline connection, that it permit Swedish journalists and politicians to visit the USSR, that it expand cultural and other exchanges and, finally, that it increase Soviet propaganda in Sweden.<sup>28</sup> Chernyshev's proposals were supported by Abramov: on March 1 in a letter to Kirill V. Novikov, Member of the Foreign Ministry<sup>29</sup> Collegium supervising the 'Scandinavian direction', Abramov expressed the opinion that 'Comrade Chernyshev's initiative concerning the reappraisal of our policy towards Sweden is timely. His suggestions for concrete measures are, with certain exceptions, correct.' Abramov was obviously not ready to abandon the whole set of preconditions his predecessor Vetrov had outlined some months previously – or he did suspected that his superiors were not yet ready to do so. Chernyshev, he pointed out, suggested that the program be implemented 'even in the absence of any change in Swedish policies towards the USSR', but that 'would certainly, by the Swedes, be seen as a great suc-

<sup>27</sup> I was not able to see the original text of Chernyshev's proposals, but their contents can be reconstructed from subsequent comments of the Fifth European Department.

<sup>28</sup> Abramov's letter to Molotov, 24 March 1946, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 31, p. 133, d. 5, l. 21.

<sup>29</sup> In March 1946 the People's Commissariats were renamed Ministries.



cess for their policy, and as a failure of our current line on the Swedish issue.' He proposed the stipulation of a number of conditions that the Swedes had to fulfil: a 'satisfactory' trade agreement and a loan on favourable terms, the establishment of additional consulates in Sweden, a ban on 'critical' articles in the press, and the abandonment of all claims for compensation for Swedish property in the Baltic countries.<sup>30</sup>

The decision-making process, however, had been set in motion. Three weeks later, apparently after Molotov's general approval of the program, Abramov submitted another memo, this time to the Foreign Minister himself. Probably informed of Molotov's personal attitude to the proposed measures, he softened his original stance. He reiterated his idea that 'it is Sweden that should take the first step, in the nature of some real concessions to the Soviet Union'. He abandoned most of the demands previously listed, retaining only 'the loan on advantageous terms, the writing off of our debt for the nationalised Swedish property in the Baltic countries', and added 'changing the Swedish envoy to Moscow'.

As a starting point, he suggested, one might invite a Swedish delegation, headed by Myrdal, to Moscow to negotiate the credit and trade agreement.<sup>31</sup>

Even the attitude to Nordic cooperation changed for the better. Abramov added to Chernyshev's program the idea that, in order to achieve 'full *de jure* recognition of the Baltic Soviet Republics', one should send representatives from these republics to various Nordic conferences.<sup>32</sup> Chernyshev, who, on 29 March, was summoned to Moscow to report his proposals to Molotov in person, went even further:

'We should reconsider our criticism of the 'Nordic cooperation' policy...' Instead of criticising it indiscriminately ... we should make a distinction between two lines of Nordic policy. Progressive circles, including the majority of the Social Democrats, carry out one line, which is even supported by some industrial circles that do not want Scandinavia subordinated to the Western powers. By strengthening Nordic links the aforementioned circles intend to preserve joint neutrality in case of a conflict and to prevent that the Scandinavian

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<sup>30</sup> Abramov's letter to Novikov, 1 March 1946. AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 31, p. 133, d. 5, l. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 21–23.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Peninsula from being transformed into a battlefield for the great powers. The other line is pursued by various reactionary elements in Sweden and other countries – the royal courts, the military, the financial bourgeoisie – which are interested in establishing close links between all the Nordic countries in order to fight against the USSR together with Western powers if the war breaks out.

If, in our criticism, we make the aforementioned distinction, this kind of criticism will find understanding among the majority of Social Democrats and the great mass of workers and labourers.<sup>33</sup>

A few days after Chernyshev's meeting with Molotov, the decision was made: on April 4 the top *Instantsia* (Politburo) passed a resolution 'On our relations with Sweden'.<sup>34</sup>

Hereafter, the landscape of bilateral relations began to change rapidly. Now that the two sides were ready to meet each other halfway, practical differences no longer seemed so formidable. In early 1946, the last group of German servicemen that had escaped to Sweden during the last months of the war, including some Baltic people, was handed over to the Soviet authorities, and Moscow silently accepted the fact that the remaining 30,000 civilian Baltic refugees would stay in Sweden. Trade and credit negotiations were under way, and the USSR was receiving a 1 billion *Kroner* loan on 'satisfactory' terms. According to the credit agreement of 7 October 1946, the loan was granted for five years and the interest rate was set at 3 per cent *pro annum*. In 1944, the conditions had been that one-half of the loan run over two 2 years and the interest rate be 3.5 per cent. To Moscow's satisfaction, an American protest, delivered on 15 August, received a 'resolute, negative response'<sup>35</sup> from the Swedish government. In 1946, Sweden became a member of the UN, and the USSR was among the powers supporting its membership.

<sup>33</sup> Chernyshev's letter to Molotov, summing up the contents of his oral report, 30 March 1946, *Ibid.*, ll. 18–19.

<sup>34</sup> In fact, apart from personal matters, like the nomination and recall of Envoys and Ambassadors, this was the only decision on Sweden taken by the Politburo in 1945–1950. See: *Politbyuro TsK RKP(b) – VKP(b): Povestki Dnya Zasedanii: 1919-1952. Katalog. V Trekh Tomakh* (The Politburo of the Central Committee of the RKP(b)/VKP(b), Catalogue), 3 vols, Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000, vol 3. 1940–1952, p. 424.

<sup>35</sup> Memo 'Anglo-American influence in Sweden' (undated, 1947), AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 38, p. 145, d. 44, l. 68.

Accordingly, half a year after the 'turn-around', Chernyshev could be proud of the results he had achieved: 'recent developments have most convincingly confirmed that the decision taken by the *Instantzia* in early April, concerning the necessity of our making a rapprochement to Sweden, was correct.' A 'soft' Soviet approach, he was sure, 'set off against the Anglo-Saxons' blunt military and political demarches, would make the USSR quite popular amongst the Swedes and would strengthen the position of the Swedish government in its resistance to the Western bloc's politics.'<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, the Social Democratic government's position and its neutrality policy now received a more positive assessment: British and American influence in Sweden was still growing in all spheres, including in security policy, but this was attributed to the collaboration of Swedish reactionaries, including 'the top-ranking circles of the Swedish military', who were 'trying to pursue a policy of their own, and, independently of the government, are creating a Western bloc by indirect means'. The government, on the other hand, 'has no intention of being dragged into such an alignment. It wishes, while avoiding a quarrel with the Anglo-Saxons, to maintain normal relations with the USSR and to once again remain neutral in case of a major war. This policy is certainly popular with the great majority of the Swedish people.' Some Cabinet members – Undén, Wigforss and Myrdal – were even characterised as advocates of better relations with the USSR.<sup>37</sup>

Chernyshev, however, was worried because the implementation of his program for a comprehensive expansion of Soviet activities in Sweden was being slowed down by the unwieldy Soviet bureaucratic machine: he was pressing Moscow for decisions on cultural and sports exchanges, and, among other things, he wanted Moscow 'to improve the situation' for the staff of the Soviet naval attaché in Stockholm, so that they could 'fulfil the crucial tasks of our naval intelligence in Sweden', and to open a consulate in Göteborg, as 'the main military activities are now taking place in southern and western Sweden' but they are still 'beyond the zone of surveillance'.<sup>38</sup>

Still, Soviet-Swedish relations did not make up an isolated sphere,

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<sup>36</sup> Chernyshev's letter to Molotov, 11 September 1946, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 31, p. 133, d. 5, l. 38.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 37.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 40.

and the mounting East-West tensions inevitably had an influence on the Soviet outlook. In March 1947, a year after the 'turn-around', the envoy's analysis was less optimistic: British and US influence in Sweden was still 'absolutely predominant in all spheres', and some military projects, like the construction of airfields for heavy aircraft, indicated growing coordination between the Swedish military and that of the US, while the government pursued its policy of 'balancing' between great powers 'irresolutely and inconsistently'. Generally, reactionary influence in the country was so great, he pointed out, that 'according to many of our friends, including Swedish Communist leaders ... in case of a war between the Anglo-Saxons and the USSR, Sweden would end up in the Anglo-Saxon camp'. Still, Chernyshev insisted, 'we have many opportunities for pursuing a positive and fruitful policy in Sweden ... based on the friendly attitude and great interest towards the USSR among the country's working masses, the generally positive policy of the Social Democratic government.... These opportunities should not be missed; they should be exploited with the utmost energy. Only then will it be possible to effectively prevent the transformation of the well-to-do Sweden into a crucial bridgehead of the Anglo-Saxon Western bloc.' Therefore, he argued, 'it is in our interest now to support the Swedish Social Democratic government as the least of all evils: any other government.... would inevitably be more reactionary and would pursue a more hostile policy towards the USSR...'<sup>39</sup>

This program, approved by a decision in the Politburo, continued to determine Soviet policies and attitudes towards Sweden. In the summer of 1947, for instance, Moscow, 'taking into account the fact that Sweden now wants to develop and improve relations with the USSR and intends to offer some resistance to American and English influence in Scandinavia', reacted positively to Stockholm's proposal to elevate the rank of both countries' representatives from envoys to ambassadors.<sup>40</sup> The Foreign Ministry also removed its objections to the establishment of a Swedish consulate in Leningrad. In exchange, the Soviet Union got consulates in Göteborg and Malmö, thus also satisfying Chernyshev's repeated requests. Obviously, 'the need to study the activities of the

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<sup>39</sup> Chernyshev's memo 'Sweden's foreign policy and Swedish-Soviet relations', 15 March 1947, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 38, p. 145, d. 44, ll. 48–54.

<sup>40</sup> Vetrov's memo to Vyshinskii, 11 July 1947, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 38, p. 142, d. 10, l. 44.

English and the Americans, who have consulates in Göteborg and Malmö, in southern Sweden and the area of the Baltic straits' overcame the Soviets' unwillingness to have Swedish representatives – or any other foreign diplomat – in the USSR's second largest city.<sup>41</sup>

Even Sweden's agreement to join the Marshall Plan – an important 'acid test' for the Soviets in mid-1947 – left the Soviets relatively unperturbed. According to Soviet diplomats in Stockholm, economic concerns were crucial to the decision: 'to get better export-import terms from the USA' and to secure Sweden's trade with Germany. At the same time Sweden 'intends to preserve its economic independence of the Americans and the English and is afraid to provoke Soviet discontent with its actions. The Swedish government certainly does not want its participation in the Paris institutions to be perceived as an alliance with the Western political block directed against the USSR.'<sup>42</sup>

By the spring of 1948, however, the Cold War was a fact, and both sides were ready to engage in active bloc-building. The Soviets were consolidating their sphere of influence: a coup in Czechoslovakia brought a purely Communist government to power; bilateral mutual assistance treaties were signed between the USSR and those East European countries that had not already signed such agreements, i.e. Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary. In the Nordic region, Finland was invited to sign a similar treaty, though of a more limited scope, and strong political pressure was exerted in order to make Helsinki accept the proposal. A similar process was taking place in the West, partly as a reaction to the Soviets' real or imagined intentions, partly driven by a confrontational logic of its own: in March 1948, the Brussels Pact was signed, and, at the Washington Conference in April 1948, NATO was founded.

The intensified East-West confrontation, of course, made it increasingly difficult for Sweden to maintain its 'balancing' and 'alliance-free' policy, and caused a good deal of anxiety in Stockholm. In December 1947, Östen Undén overcame his usual unwillingness to criticise great powers' policies and complained to Chernyshev about the aggravated

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<sup>41</sup> Vetrov's memo to Vyshinskii, 11 July 1947, *Ibid.*, I. 38.

<sup>42</sup> Memo by Charge d'affaires S. Bazarov and Second counsellor A. Aleksandrov 'The attitude of Swedish government and other circles to the Marshall Plan and the 16 states' conference in Paris', 26 July 1947, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 38, p. 145, d. 44, I. 106.

international situation, hinting that Moscow, to some degree, was to be blamed for this development. He did not believe that the USA really contemplated starting a war in the near future, the Foreign Minister said, but 'American propaganda against the Soviet Union has already done a lot', and if the Soviets wanted to reduce the tension, they should adopt a less confrontationist approach in their dealings with Washington.<sup>43</sup>

In Moscow, traditional suspicions of Swedish Nordic policies were revived, especially in connection with Moscow's protracted and difficult negotiations with Finland on the proposed Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.<sup>44</sup> As early as 27 October 1947, Vice Foreign Minister, Ya. A. Malik issued a directive to Soviet representatives in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. In this directive, he emphasised that Scandinavian 'reactionary circles' were attempting to 'revive the idea of a "Nordic defence union"...under the influence ... of USA and Great Britain'. He instructed the relevant Embassies and Missions 'to gather all facts' on Nordic conferences and meetings and submit proposals for 'measures' to oppose anti-Soviet activities in these countries.<sup>45</sup> On 18 November, Chernyshev submitted the required memo. In spite of the tone of Malik's directive, Chernyshev's statement still reflected the idea of a soft approach: while maintaining that the Soviet attitude to the Nordic cooperation promoted by the Swedes should be 'negative...in principle', he repeated the counsel that he had previously offered, i.e. that pains should be taken to distinguish between the 'reactionary' and the 'democratic' dimensions of Nordic cooperation, and to even encourage the latter, using Finnish left-wing organisations as a kind of a 'spearhead unit'.<sup>46</sup> According to the Ambassador, one could, on a more general level, change the character of this cooperation by 'seriously strengthening' Soviet influence in the Nordic countries,

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<sup>43</sup> Chernyshev's conversation with Undén, 17 December 1947, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 38, p. 142, d. 10, ll. 125–126.

<sup>44</sup> The Soviet position at these negotiations is extensively covered in academic literature. See, for example, my article on the subject: M. Korobochkin, 'The USSR and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with Finland', in Jukka Nevakivi (ed.) *Finnish-Soviet Relations 1944–1948*, Nevakivi, Jukka (ed.), *Finnish-Soviet Relations 1944–1948*, Papers of a seminar organized March 21–25, 1994, by the Department of Political History, University of Helsinki.

<sup>45</sup> *Norge og Sovjetunionen 1917–55*, 1995, doc. 310.

<sup>46</sup> Chernyshev's memo 'On the so called Nordic cooperation', 17 November 1947, AVP RF, f. 06 (Molotov's secretariat), op. 9, p. 81, d. 1271, ll. 13–15.

especially in the economic sphere. In Sweden this could be achieved by meeting Stockholm halfway on the issues of grain and oil supplies, especially as the Swedish harvest had been poor in 1947 and as the Americans had reduced their oil export quotas to Sweden.<sup>47</sup>

But this was merely the beginning of a major political reassessment of Nordic cooperation. On 29 March 1948, on the very day that the Finnish delegation was in Moscow to conclude negotiations on the mutual assistance treaty, Abramov signed a summary of the reports to the Foreign Ministry that had been written on Malik's orders. Being stationed in Moscow, the head of the Fifth European Department probably understood better than Chernyshev that the directive's formulation called for ready-made answers, or perhaps the impact of the general deterioration of East-West relations was felt more strongly in March than it had been in November, but if we compare his conclusions to Chernyshev's analysis, we notice a considerably sharper attitude. 'Official governmental cooperation between the Nordic ... countries', he pointed out, 'has, from the beginning of 1948, openly placed itself at the disposal of Anglo-American plans to split Europe and to create an anti-Soviet Western bloc. All talk about a Scandinavian 'bridge between East and West' has come to an end. Bets are more and more openly placed on a military alliance with USA and England.' The 'reactionary' and anti-Soviet character of Nordic cooperation was, in particular, reflected in Swedish policies towards Finland, which were aimed at 'neutralising' Soviet influence there. The framework of Nordic cooperation was being used by Finnish 'reactionaries', especially Social Democrats, who 'follow the direct instructions of the Swedish Social Democratic Party', in their struggle against domestic, 'democratic circles' and in their efforts to 'hinder a strengthening of the friendship with the USSR'.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, rather than showing a general 'negative attitude', one should take direct countermeasures: 'As the political, economic and military cooperation of the Scandinavian states, to say nothing of the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., ll. 15–16. In fact, with regard to grain exports, at least, Chernyshev's proposals were accepted in Moscow, and the shipment of 50000 tons of wheat and 15000 tons of rye was included into the trade agreement of 1948 (see, Chernyshev's conversation with Trade Minister Gjöres, 17 December 1947, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 38, p. 142, d. 10, l. 124.

<sup>48</sup> Abramov's letter to Vice Minister Zorin, 29 March 1948, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 39, p. 153, d. 43, ll. 2–4.

creation of a Scandinavian bloc, is now to our disadvantage and, on the other hand, to the advantage of the Americans and English, our task is to offer all possible opposition to this cooperation and to criticise it.' For the time being, 'our criticism should mostly take the form of publications in the Soviet press', but 'concrete attempts to create a formalised Scandinavian bloc or military alliance, if they are undertaken, can be opposed by diplomatic means'. Paradoxically, this formulation is modelled on the Anglo-French draft note, which the Allies had planned to deliver to the Swedes and the Norwegians in early 1940, in which they maintained that any Scandinavian union tied to Germany by a 'special relationship' or that presumed German assistance, would be regarded as an alliance hostile to Britain and France.<sup>49</sup>

Chernyshev's proposals (and those submitted by Abramov himself in March 1946) were not forgotten, however. In a thoroughly amended form, they were now presented as a tool to 'use diverse forms of "grass-roots", Nordic cooperation to our advantage, filling them with new contents'. In this connection, the Finns were again assigned a special role: 'the leaders of the Finnish Communist Party and the SKDL (Finnish People's Democratic League) should pay serious attention to the participation of Finnish progressive political circles' representatives at various 'Nordic' conferences attended by Finland, which had been arranged by bourgeois and Social Democratic circles in the Scandinavian countries, including their governments. Their tasks there would be to gather information, to attempt to attach a more progressive character to negotiations of all kinds, or, if the venture is clearly reactionary, to unmask it by demonstratively leaving the conference, meeting etc.' For that same reason, Soviet participation was also encouraged: Abramov suggested 'to include gradually the northern republics of the Soviet Union – the RSFSR, the Estonian, Latvian and Karelian-Finnish Republics in the framework of "Nordic cooperation"'.<sup>50</sup> I have not been able to trace how specific top-ranking officials of the Ministry reacted to this plan for an 'all-out offensive'. Preparations were being made for sending representatives from the Soviet republics to Nordic conferences, at least until 'the whole issue was dropped' in late 1948.<sup>51</sup> Anyway, a few

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., ll. 10–11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., ll. 11–12.

<sup>51</sup> Minute on Abramov's letter attached to the list of potential participants, Ibid., l. 36.



weeks thereafter, the Fifth European Department's analyst faced the task of defining a Soviet attitude to Nordic cooperation of a more concrete sort: Sweden, confronted with active alliance-building on both sides of the Iron Curtain, decided to create a bloc of its own – the Scandinavian Defence Union.

## **Scandinavian defence talks: an alternative?**

From their inception, inter-Scandinavian negotiations on a mutual defence alliance were watched closely and with increasing alarm in Moscow. In late May 1948, Chernyshev presented an overall analysis of Sweden's foreign policy in this new situation. 'After the events in Czechoslovakia in February and the signing of the Soviet-Finnish treaty,' he observed, 'the attitude of the Swedish government and the Social Democratic party towards the Soviet Union has changed markedly for the worse'. Moreover, 'now, in Sweden, everything is directed towards an accelerated creation of a military alliance between Sweden, Norway and Denmark, which would inevitably become an affiliate of the Western bloc, and the Scandinavian countries would be compelled to abandon even a formal policy of neutrality.' Undén, Sweden's principal foreign policy maker, might 'personally ... hope, that by creating such an alliance, he will keep Norway from joining the Western bloc and ensure the Scandinavian countries' joint defence of their traditional neutrality policy', but he was acting in an 'excessively irresolute manner', and most observers – including Sven Linderot, of course – had no doubt that instead Sweden would be dragged into the Western bloc 'through the back door'.<sup>52</sup>

The diplomatic establishment in Moscow certainly shared Chernyshev's position. Given the traditional Soviet fear and dislike of any political – not to mention military – blocs close to the USSR borders, it could hardly be otherwise. Therefore, the principal decision for Soviet diplomacy was the choice between an active or passive line: could official demarches that exploited Stockholm's 'fear of the Soviet Union's negative reaction'<sup>53</sup> discourage Sweden from abandoning its neutrality,

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<sup>52</sup> Chernyshev's comments on Undén's speech at the Social Democratic Congress, submitted to Molotov on 25 May 1948, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 39, p. 153, d. 43, ll. 37–43.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 39.

or would they only make matters worse. The Fifth European Department, obviously, was in favour of the first line. On 14 May 1948, one of its staff members, V. Karyakin, summed up the first results of the Scandinavian negotiations. Unlike Chernyshev, he emphasised the emerging disagreements between the countries concerned, and outlined a less alarmist view of the Swedish position: 'While the Norwegian and Danish governments are ready to subordinate the Nordic bloc to the Anglo-Americans unconditionally and include it into – or at least coordinate its activities with – the 'Brussels Alliance', the Swedish government ... still insists on creating an isolated Nordic bloc' with the goal of securing its participants' non-involvement in a new war. In the light of this 'hesitant' Swedish position, Karyakin suggested that one should present the Swedes with a note, enquiring whether the information about an imminent Scandinavian military alliance was true, and at the same time, the Soviet Union's opposition to such an undertaking should be clearly expressed.

By doing this, he explained, Moscow could strike two birds with one stone: 'A possible Swedish answer to such a note ...could take either the form of a denial... or the form of a confirmation..., accompanied by a denial that the organised bloc be hostile towards the Soviet Union as well as any links to the Western bloc'. In the latter case Moscow would get 'certain – and to some extent binding – assurances from one of its participants', as well as a pretext for delivering another note to Sweden, or to the three Scandinavian countries together. This note would contain 'a resolute warning to the effect that any special links that the created Scandinavian alliance might make with third powers, to any detriment to the security of the Soviet Union and its allies would lead the Soviet government to consider the Scandinavian alliance aimed against the Soviet Union.'<sup>54</sup>

No official demarches, however, followed. Apparently, the 'activist' proposals were turned down as being too radical, and a 'wait and see' approach was chosen, in order to avoid turning Sweden's 'hesitation' into an undesirable commitment, i.e. to Sweden allying itself with the Western bloc. As the Scandinavian defence talks went on, this approach remained unchanged. In October, for instance, a similar fate awaited Abramov's more cautious recommendations in connection with the tri-

<sup>54</sup> Karyakin's memo to Zorin, 14 May 1948, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 39, p. 153, d. 43, ll. 14–17.

partite Oslo conference and the establishment of the Scandinavian Defence Committee. Familiar as he was with the position of his superiors, he suggested that the USSR refrain 'from reacting by diplomatic means' and instead launch an 'energetic' press campaign against the Scandinavian Defence Union, reminding its future participants – for the time being, 'in a cautious way' – of the Soviet stance on the Swedish-Finnish-Norwegian military bloc that had been contemplated in 1940.<sup>55</sup> The only result was a handwritten minute from Vice Minister Zorin: 'To bring up the [Scandinavian defence talks] topic in the "Novoe Vremya" (journal) (calmly)'.<sup>56</sup>

Moscow was probably also influenced by the fact that it was receiving veiled warnings from Stockholm against taking a more radical stance. On September 14, Undén, apparently aware of the Soviets' anxiety, summoned Charge d'affairs S. Bazarov in order to give him an official reassurance that the tripartite negotiations 'do not change Sweden's foreign policy' and to assure the Soviets that the country had no intention 'to join the Western bloc'. When questioned directly whether the creation of an expert committee on Scandinavian defence entailed certain binding obligations for the participants 'as regards their mutual contacts with other countries', Undén answered that the governments involved would refrain from taking any steps towards negotiating with other power groupings (e.g. joining these groupings) for as long as the committee was working. He did, however, add one significant remark: *'if, of course, something unforeseen should not happen during this period'*.<sup>57</sup>

It appears that, during the final months of the Scandinavian Defence Union negotiations, Sweden's special position was taken more seriously, and its adherence to neutrality was attributed to a number of 'real reasons': Sweden's 130-year experience of non-belligerency, and the hope, shared by government and people, 'in case of a Third World War ... to

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<sup>55</sup> Abramov's memo to Zorin, 20 October 1940. Ibid., ll. 51–52.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., l. 51.

<sup>57</sup> Bazarov's conversation with Undén, 14 September 1948, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 10, p. 77, d. 1090, ll. 1–8. Another, more direct warning along this line, was made by Ambassador Rolf Sohlman in his conversation with Zorin after the collapse of the Scandinavian defence negotiations. Sweden, Sohlman said, returned to its 'old neutrality policy', and 'no surprises should be expected from our side'. 'The Swedish people and the Swedish government want tranquillity in the North', he continued. 'If this tranquillity should be broken, then, of course, no one knows how the people would react' (See Zorin's conversation with Sohlman and E. Modig, 10 February 1949, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 40, p. 155, d. 5, ll. 5–6.)

avoid Sweden's involvement in the war and to repeat the previous experience of a 'neutrality policy', its 'wish to retain Finland as an outpost between East and West, to deprive the Soviet Union of a pretext to increase its pressure on Finland even at the time, by taking more hard steps against this country' (therefore, the 'Finland argument', that caused so much debate in political and academic circles, was considered genuine, at least by the USSR), the fear of becoming a battlefield 'even at the very beginning of World War III' because of the country's proximity to the Soviet Union, and the 'mistrust in the Western countries' ability to render Sweden ... effective military assistance at the necessary moment...'<sup>58</sup>

Neither these rather sober evaluations, nor the fact that Sweden refused to join a defence union linked to the Western alliance, could, however, alleviate Soviet concerns about the country's future position. After the breakdown of the Scandinavian talks, and with the creation of NATO being imminent, Moscow once again had a black and white vision of the world. It perceived Sweden's 'alliance-free' policy as a 'demagogical' smokescreen, meant to hide the fact that the 'Swedish government ... apparently proceeds according to the idea that Sweden formally should stay out of any great power blocs for as long as this would be practically possible. At the moment when this is no longer possible and Sweden is faced with the choice of which side it should fight on, Sweden ... would, without hesitation, join the Western powers' bloc'. This observation, based on the argument that Sweden basically belonged to the Western world, is probably close to the truth, but it led the Foreign Ministry analysts to draw a far more alarmist conclusion: 'even now' the country, with the Social Democratic government's active endorsement, 'is being transformed into the Anglo-American imperialists' advanced base in the future war against the USSR.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> These reasons were listed in a 'Short memo' on the failure of Scandinavian defence talks, prepared by the Fifth European Department, apparently in February 1949 (see AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 40d, p. 158, d. 1, ll. 147–150), but they reflect earlier analysis presented, for instance, in Aleksandrov's memo 'On the issue of Scandinavian Defence Ministers' conference in Oslo', AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 39, p. 153, d. 42, ll. 53–63.

<sup>59</sup> 'Short memo', AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 40d, p. 158, d. 1, ll. 148–152. It is interesting to note that, by the look of the text, the last page, which contains the most radical statements about Swedish policies, may have been added later.

## 1949–1950: the aftermath and a prelude for a reassessment

As we have seen, from late 1947 to early 1949, the Soviet attitude to Sweden underwent a complete *volte face*, from the ‘soft line’ of 1946 to a downright denouncement of the country’s foreign policy in 1949, a development that was entirely in line with the emergence of a general Cold War confrontation. For a while, this attitude bordered on hysteria: nearly all political actions undertaken by Sweden, especially in relation to the first European integration schemes of 1949 and 1950, the continued Nordic cooperation – the Scandinavian Customs Union, for instance, not to mention the ‘limited military cooperation’ – were interpreted as so many steps towards a Swedish participation in NATO.<sup>60</sup> In this strained atmosphere, a rumour spread by the press about alleged American attempts to draw Sweden into the Alliance was enough to provoke alarm in Moscow and instructions to the Embassy in Stockholm to check the information thoroughly.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, in all the evaluations that the Embassy prepared for the Fifth European Department, Sweden was invariably called a ‘de facto’ or ‘secret’ member of the North Atlantic Pact.

On the other hand, by fiercely denouncing the Swedish government for its ‘hypocritical’ statements and actual deviations from its neutrality policy, Soviet diplomats revealed the importance that Moscow set on Sweden’s continued non-alignment. Pragmatically reasoning analysts at the Foreign Ministry realised this, especially when contemplating concrete measures to be taken. In December 1949, Aleksandrov, now the

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<sup>60</sup> See memos from the Soviet Embassy in Norway ‘On the issue of the Scandinavian Customs Union’, 26 June 1949 (AVP RF, f. 0140, p. 40d, p. 158, d. 1., ll. 16–52) and ‘Scandinavian cooperation after Denmark’s and Norway’s joining the North Atlantic Pact’, December 1949 (Ibid., f. 021, op. 3, p. 12, d. 283, ll. 18–36), or the memo by G. Farafonov from the Fifth European Department ‘Sweden and the European Council’, 18 October 1949 (Ibid., f. 0140, op. 40d, p. 158, d. 1, ll. 83–89). The evaluation of Sweden’s attitude to the Schuman Plan, submitted by the new Ambassador to Stockholm, K. K. Rodionov, in June 1950, contains a dissenting opinion on the government’s independent position regarding this scheme and the American’s inability to make it change its attitude (the Schuman Plan, of course, was regarded as another American scheme for the economic subordination of Europe). Characteristically, Rodionov was reprimanded by Moscow for expressing ‘controversial statements’ and in fact had to rewrite the memo in accordance with the general line (see AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 41, p. 162, d. 25, ll. 1–7, 8–11, 14–18).

<sup>61</sup> See memo by I. Mayevskii to Zorin, 24 April 1950 on an alleged ‘merging’ of the Marshall Plan organisations and NATO (AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 41, p. 163, d. 48, ll. 1–2) or the letter by P. D. Orlov, who succeeded Abramov as head of the Fifth European Department, to Ambassador Rodionov, 3 June 1950 (Ibid., l. 5).

First Secretary of the Fifth European Department, outlined a new program for Soviet activities in Sweden after the creation of NATO. Repeating all the standard formulas and drawing up a long list of examples that demonstrated Stockholm's willingness to collaborate with Washington – from arms shipments to the way Sweden voted in the UN – he nevertheless pointed out that 'Sweden's refusal to join the North Atlantic Pact openly testifies to certain peculiarities of the Swedish policy'.

'Sweden is apprehensive about Soviet reactions and hopes - on the basis of its relatively significant military and economic resources - to once again stay, initially at least, out of the war, if it breaks out', while the economic difficulties that the country had experienced made its 'ruling circles' more willing to expand trade with the 'crisis-free markets of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies.' Therefore, Aleksandrov concludes, Sweden's 'official non-participation in the Atlantic bloc is advantageous to us, as it makes it more difficult for the Anglo-Americans to use Swedish territory as a military base and, to some extent, lowers the reputation of the Atlantic Pact, especially in Northern Europe.'<sup>62</sup>

Aleksandrov suggested a whole set of measures to 'prevent' the Swedish government from violating its neutrality, and to 'help the Swedish people realise' the 'duplicity' of its government's policies. The Embassy should abandon its self-imposed isolation and 'drastically increase its contacts with representatives of various Swedish social circles, in order to gather extensive and diverse information about the situation in the country'. In particular, it should list all facts concerning Sweden's cooperation with states that were members of NATO and duly inform Moscow, so that Moscow could react 'most energetically', using the media and, if necessary, diplomatic demarches.<sup>63</sup>

Among other things, Aleksandrov introduced a new approach: Swedish 'democratic forces' should be mobilised in a large-scale campaign for 'peace and solidarity with the Soviet Union' under the leadership of the Communist Party; which had 'ridden itself of its illusions concerning "cooperation" with the right-wing leadership of the Social

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<sup>62</sup> Aleksandrov's memo 'Sweden's policy after Norway's and Denmark's joining the North Atlantic Pact', 12 December 1949, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 40d, p. 158, d. 1, ll. 107–108.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., ll. 108, 109.

Democratic Party'. As the 'democratic camp' was badly organised, the Soviets should assist in its consolidation. In particular, concrete measures should be taken 'in the nearest future to reorganise the existing Swedish-Soviet groupings and to transform them into a unified mass association... On the basis of contacts with this reorganised association we should expand our cultural links with Sweden...'<sup>64</sup>

When, with the outbreak of the Korean War, the early Cold War reached its peak, the Soviet Union became increasingly fearful of political and military encirclement, and the issue of Swedish neutrality became even more important. Even after the local elections in Sweden, which were a great victory for the Social Democrats and a defeat for the Communists, Moscow found consolation in the fact that the victorious government 'would not dare to change the country's foreign policy line', as the voters supported them because of their declared adherence to neutrality.<sup>65</sup> In a December 1950 memo on Soviet-Swedish relations, the Embassy in Stockholm noted, with some satisfaction, 'the emerging tendency of the Swedish bourgeois and Social Democratic circles to demonstrate a somewhat more cautious attitude towards the USSR'. In conversations with Soviet diplomats, for instance, Swedish officials were 'even more consistently trying to reassure us of the 'unchanged' character of Sweden's "alliance-free policy"'.<sup>66</sup>

Of even greater importance, however, was another conclusion, based on the outcome of Rodionov's conversations with Undén, Defence Minister Allan Voug and the Norwegian Ambassador in Stockholm: the Swedish government officials, keeping in mind that the country's 'non-participation in the war, to a certain extent, would depend on the absence or presence of foreign troops in Norway', unofficially asked whether the Norwegian government, while being a member of NATO, would be able 'in case of a war, to declare Norwegian territory non-accessible to foreign troops.'<sup>67</sup>

The information about how the Swedes had tried to induce Norway to extend its refusal to allow peacetime stationing of foreign troops and

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., I. 108.

<sup>65</sup> Memo by F. Mal'gin 'The results of the municipal elections in Sweden', 19 October 1950, AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 41, p. 163, d. 45, I. 218.

<sup>66</sup> Memo by Soviet Embassy in Stockholm 'Soviet-Swedish relations in December 1950', Ibid., II. 271–272.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., I. 286.

bases on its soil to include wartime conditions probably served as a basis for a demarche that Rodionov subsequently delivered in Stockholm. In the beginning of 1951 the Ambassador, apparently receiving instructions from Moscow, unofficially sounded the Swedes out about whether they would exert influence on Norway and try to make it 'abandon its membership in the Atlantic Pact' altogether. If Norway was willing to leave NATO 'and, together with Sweden, pursue a consistent neutrality policy', he hinted, 'the Soviet Union, in case of a large scale war, would respect the neutrality of the Scandinavian peninsula'.<sup>68</sup>

This tendency to regard neutrality in a more positive – or more precisely, less negative – manner, should, of course, not be interpreted as a comprehensive reassessment of Soviet policies on this issue. The tendency had existed, all along, alongside the traditional, Soviet attitude to neutrals as 'nothing better than enemies'. The latter attitude had become more predominant during the late 1940s and early 1950s, being nurtured by the Cold War ideology of confrontation. In Stalin's time, a flexible attitude had little chance of becoming predominant. All the same, as flexibility took expression in some practical actions, e.g. Rodionov's demarche and, the following year, the positive reaction to Urho Kekkonen's plan 'to consolidate the Nordic countries around the idea of neutrality',<sup>69</sup> it did help pave the way for such a reassessment, which was to take place later, when Khrushchev came to power.

## Concluding remarks

As we have seen, the important role that Sweden played in the Nordic region attracted considerable attention in Moscow during the late 1940s. From 1945 to 1950, Soviet attitudes and practical policies towards Sweden went through several stages: from the 'hard line'

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<sup>68</sup> Conversation between Norwegian Foreign Minister Halvard Lange, and Swedish Ambassador to Oslo Hans Ahlmann, 21 February 1951, in *Norge og Sovjetunionen*, 1995, doc. 339. According to the record of conversation, Undén made it clear to Rodionov, that Sweden would not exert any pressure on Norway. Still, he communicated Rodionov's message to Oslo.

<sup>69</sup> For more details on the events preceding Kekkonen's 'Pyjama-pocket speech' of 23 January 1952, see my article 'Politika SSSR v otnoshenii Finlyandii i Norvegii, 1947–1953' (Soviet policies toward Finland and Norway, 1947–1953) in O. Chernyshova (ed.), *Severnaya Evropa. Problemy istorii*. Moscow, 1999.



employed immediately after World War II to the more accommodating approach that characterised the ‘turn’ of 1946, and then again to a more negative stance caused by growing Cold War confrontation, which, however, was accompanied by a growing tendency to appreciate neutrality and non-alignment, in a situation where the USSR was faced with numerous, powerful adversaries.

To a large extent Soviet analysis and planning with respect to Sweden was shaped by overall international developments and the dominant ideological dogmas (though it is likely that the latter, in many cases, were mere tributes to the ‘official point of view’ rather than rules for how to conduct policies). Still, if we leave the ‘standard formulas’ – and accusations – aside, I think one would be justified in claiming that the Soviet evaluations of Swedish policies in most cases were realistic, and that the Soviet Union’s practical decisions generally followed a moderate approach. Soviet mistrust of neutrality and aversion to any political groupings close to the USSR’s borders affected the analysis and policy proposals greatly, but they never led to radical steps being taken. Apparently, Soviet policy makers, who realised that their influence in Sweden was limited, preferred to be inactive, rather than engage in counterproductive actions that could only make the situation worse and jeopardise the USSR’s security interests.

## Chapter 5

### Khrushchev and Sweden

*Alexey Komarov*

I still vividly remember the day when we gathered on the third floor in the old building of the Institute of General History (which then belonged to the USSR Academy of Sciences). We stood in the conference hall decorated with a portrait of Lenin attending Bill Taubman's presentation on Nikita S. Khrushchev. It was 1988, the interest in Soviet history was exceptionally great and scholars were busy filling 'blank spots' in that history. The hall was full of excited listeners. Up until now, Khrushchev's name had been hushed down in the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders who came to power more than forty years ago, after the October plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (further: CPSU CC) in 1964, understood that the unmasking of yet another Soviet 'cult of personality', one that had taken shape during the struggle against Stalin's personality cult, would provoke a negative reaction from the country's population as well as from the international community. After the power shift, it became practically impossible to even mention Khrushchev's name publicly or in the media – something that I personally have experienced.

This explains our interest in Bill Taubman's presentation. Besides, the presentation was quite interesting in itself, delivered in perfect Russian with a slight American accent, an accent that Soviet citizens had rarely heard. For me, both the presentation and the image of Bill Taubman speaking from the rostrum with Lenin's portrait behind him became a memorable symbol of the 'fresh winds of change' that had started to blow in the country, and which, in due course, would blow away the Soviet state itself from the political world map.

The fact that I was working on an article on Soviet-Norwegian relations also nurtured my interest in Khrushchev. As I read more and more records of conversations, memos, 'political letters' and other archival documents produced during the Khrushchev era, I discovered that the

seemingly monotonous string of ideological clichés and unadulterated foreign policy propaganda in fact held a deeper meaning. I discovered that the dull texts from *Pravda* that I had read or listened to on the radio during my teenage years hid the evidence of a sharp ideological struggle between rival superpowers, and that this dramatic ideological confrontation between capitalism and socialism was tinted by Nikita Khrushchev's peculiarities and controversial personality. In this context I would like to add that in the 1970s and later I personally met many of those who were involved in negotiating Soviet-Scandinavian relations during the Khrushchev era. So, when I read the documents that had been compiled over the years leading up to 1964, I remembered their authors, whose voices were still ringing in my ears.

## **The importance of the Scandinavian countries**

Some might claim that the small Scandinavian nations hardly could have had a considerable influence on the global conflict between the two ideological systems. And yet, these small nations did play an important part in the configuration of international relations during the Cold War. Their position, between the two opposing blocs, placed them in the centre of attention of both Moscow and Washington. The Scandinavian countries' military and political doctrines took shape in an emerging bipolar world and an escalating Cold War. The history of the Nordic countries' foreign policies and their relations with the USSR reflects the complex political developments of the Cold War era.

After Stalin's death and Khrushchev's ascent to power, Soviet foreign policy began to change. One thing had become obvious – during late Stalin years Soviet foreign policy had ended up in a blind alley and something had to be done to ease international tension.

In other chapters of this book the principal foreign policy steps undertaken during the Khrushchev era have been outlined. Still, I would like to emphasize once again that in spite of all the change that had taken place, and in spite of Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization, the Soviet foreign policy outlook on the world remained basically unchanged. It still included the notion of a world divided by two socio-political systems and by their rivalry on the international arena, the notion of a deepening comprehensive crisis of the capitalist system that

would lead to its inevitable collapse and to the triumph of socialism. At the same time, however, it was proclaimed that Soviet foreign policy should be based on the principle of peaceful coexistence formulated by Lenin. Furthermore, in 1956, at the 20th CPSU Congress, the conclusion was reached that it was theoretically possible to avert a new world war. This, however, was theory. In praxis, the Soviet foreign policy of the Khrushchev era had three principle purposes: first, as far as ever possible to rally the socialist countries around the USSR; second, to create a neutral 'layer' between the two military-political blocs; and third, to gradually initiate peaceful cooperation with the NATO countries.<sup>1</sup>

During the period of which we are talking, Moscow saw the international situation and the position of the Nordic nations in the following way: The Soviet-Finnish relations were developing satisfactorily, thanks to the Treaty of 1948. Sweden continued to pursue its neutrality policy, let be with a pro-Western leaning. Norway, Denmark and Iceland had joined NATO, but nevertheless, they pursued their own policies on issues such as nuclear weapons and foreign bases. In fact, from a geopolitical point of view, Soviet leaders paid much more attention to Norway and Denmark than to distant Iceland. Thus, militarily and politically, the Scandinavian countries constituted a special northern European region, positioned between the rivalling blocs. Sweden made up the region's centre, separating Finland, which pursued the so-called Paasikivi-Kekkonen line, from NATO's Nordic members, Denmark and Norway. This added to the importance of Sweden's neutral (alliance-free) policy. As we know, before Norway and Denmark joined NATO in April 1949, the three Scandinavian governments had tried to form a Scandinavian defence alliance founded on the principle of neutrality. The Soviet Union had opposed the idea of a Scandinavian bloc, though it had refrained from issuing any official diplomatic demarches concerning the issue. The discussion of a possible Scandinavian defence union was renewed in early 1952 when Urho Kekkonen, in a speech published in the Finnish newspaper *Maakansa*, promoted the idea of Scandinavian neutrality. The Finnish politician's initiative had been cleared in advance with the Soviet leadership. Still, the idea of a 'Scandinavian

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<sup>1</sup> A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva. Vospominaniya diplomata* (From Kollontai to Gorbachev. Recollections of a Diplomat), Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994.

neutral alliance' had been dismissed as suspect. Moscow concluded that the 'plans to create Scandinavian groupings under the banner of neutrality, as past experience has shown, will be exploited by aggressive states to the detriment of the cause of peace'.<sup>2</sup> It was also believed that anti-Soviet circles would try to use the idea of a Scandinavian neutral bloc to tie Finland to the West and to intensify US pressure on Sweden.<sup>3</sup> In February 1954, in an issue of the CPSU CC theoretical *Kommunist* journal, the Soviet government's denunciation was expressed in detail.

## The post-Stalinist notion of 'positive neutrality'

As a whole, the Stalin era was characterised by a negative stance on neutrality. From the mid-1950s and onwards, however, the Soviet attitude to neutrality changed and the term 'positive neutrality' started to appear with some frequency in political texts. This positive attitude towards neutrality was tied to the idea of an international *détente* policy, 'the spirit of Geneva'.

The aforementioned change became manifest in Soviet foreign policy towards Sweden as well as the whole of Scandinavia. In 1956, Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander visited the Soviet Union. A reciprocal visit by Nikita Khrushchev, CPSU CC First Secretary and (as of 1958) Chairman of the USSR's Council of Ministers, was scheduled for 1959. A CPSU CC Resolution 'On the measures for the further development of relations between the USSR and Sweden' was adopted in April 1958. The resolution listed the following principal directions of Soviet policy towards Sweden: to oppose attempts to drag Sweden into NATO; to gain Swedish support for Soviet proposals to ease international tension; and to develop economic and political relations with Sweden.

Preparations for any foreign state visit require serious effort on the part of a number of agencies. The current state of bilateral relations must be analysed, in order to decide which stance to take on issues that may be raised by the host country, and in this case, in order to define Soviet foreign policy priorities with respect to Sweden and Scandinavia in general. On 13 July 1959, the Foreign Ministry's Scandinavian Department submitted an extensive memo on 'Nordic countries' foreign

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<sup>2</sup> AVP RF, f. 0116, op. 49, p. 190, d. 9, l. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ll. 57–58.

policy and their attitudes towards the USSR'. In their section on Sweden, the authors pointed out that '(while) pursuing its policy of neutrality, Sweden leans heavily towards the West, which can be explained by its close economic ties and ideological affinity with the West of its ruling circles'.<sup>4</sup> Still, the memo emphasised, being the USSR's close neighbour Sweden did take the increased economic and military power of the USSR into account and generally tried to maintain good neighbourly relations with Moscow.

During the Khrushchev era, discussions on important international political issues played an important role in the Soviet-Swedish dialogue. The Soviet Union was carefully monitoring Sweden's position on the international stage and tried to influence it. In 1959, these issues included the German question, the Berlin question, the recognition of East Germany, the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, the ban on nuclear tests, peaceful exploitation of outer space, and the relations with the People's Republic of China. The most important issues, which directly involved the Scandinavian countries, can be described as follows: the creation of a nuclear- and missile-free zone in Scandinavia, the transformation of the Baltic into a 'sea of peace', European integration and Nordic cooperation.

Among the questions concerning the Soviet-Swedish bilateral relations that were likely to come up during the visit to Sweden, the memo mentioned Soviet-Swedish economic relations as well as some aspects of the scientific, technical and cultural contacts, the protection of the Baltic salmon etc. Also the Raoul Wallenberg case and the question of granting relatives of Baltic immigrants living in Sweden and Soviet citizens of Swedish origin exit visas.

As it turned out, little of the prepared material was actually used: Khrushchev's visit to Sweden, as well as to Norway and Denmark, was cancelled at the last moment. The reason for the cancellation was that Dwight D. Eisenhower extended an invitation to visit the USA, which the Soviet leader received shortly before his scheduled Scandinavian trip. Later, in his memoirs, Khrushchev would sum up his reflections on the cancellation of an already arranged visit as follows: 'According to etiquette, we should visit the countries that had first invited us. But (a visit to) America attracted us more. The USA is the key capitalist

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., I. 84.

power'. Khrushchev believed that simply reaching an understanding between the USA and the USSR could solve controversial international issues. Other countries would comply with their agreement.<sup>5</sup>

## Khrushchev's 1963 visit to Scandinavia

Khrushchev's visit to Scandinavia, cancelled in 1959 under the official pretext that a noisy anti-Soviet campaign had cropped up in those countries right then, actually took place five years later. New preparations for a trip to Sweden were made when the Swedish government renewed its invitation to the Soviet leader during the Swedish Foreign Minister Torsten Nilsson's visit to Moscow in May 1963. This visit was a diplomatic success. However, soon thereafter, on 20 June 1963, Soviet-Swedish relations deteriorated dramatically, as a result of Colonel Stig Wennerström, disarmament expert of the Swedish Foreign Ministry, being charged with spying for the USSR. An *aide-memoire* presented to the Soviet Embassy in Stockholm on 25 June declared the military attaché and the first secretary of the embassy *personae non grata*. In response, on 16 July, N. D. Belokhvostikov, Soviet Ambassador to Sweden, visited Torsten Nilsson and handed him an *aide memoire* prepared by the Soviets. The draft note can be found in the archival file on the Wennerström affair. A comparison between the draft and the final text of the *aide memoire* shows that Moscow was trying to minimise the incident's negative consequences for Soviet-Swedish relations.<sup>6</sup> The oral statement, delivered by the Soviet Ambassador when he handed over the *aide memoire*, contained, among other things, the following passage: 'If the Soviet government in its relations to Sweden were driven by anything but an honest desire to develop really good neighbour relations... it, as you understand, Mr. Minister, could easily, a long time ago, have unleashed several campaigns like the one that has been unleashed in Sweden at this moment'.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, a decision to deport the Swedish military attaché had been under preparation in Moscow, but the process had been halted.<sup>8</sup> A letter prepared for the CPSU CC read: 'To refrain

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<sup>5</sup> M. G. Pervukhin. 'Korotko o perezhitom' (A few words on my past), *Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya*, No. 5, 2003, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 54, p. 208, d. 9, l. 91.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., l. 44.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., l. 35.

from responding by taking any additional measures, as they would only have aggravated the situation and played into the hands of reactionary circles interested in undermining the nascent improvement of Soviet-Swedish relations'.<sup>9</sup>

On 15 June 1954, Nikita Khrushchev and his entourage of officials left for Scandinavia on board the steamship *Bashkiriya*. After a visit to Denmark, the Soviet delegation headed for Sweden. On 22 June, *Bashkiriya* arrived in the Stockholm harbour. Accompanied by a thundering Salute of Nations the Soviet guests descended onto the pier where they were met by Tage Erlander and spouse, cabinet ministers, representatives of the Stockholm administration and the public.

The principal negotiations between Khrushchev and Erlander took place on 23 June. The talks began with an exchange of opinions on current international issues. In his speech, Khrushchev emphasised the recent move towards *détente*. He condemned US policy, describing it as 'the most unstable and irresponsible policy'<sup>10</sup> as well as Western democracy, of which he said: 'this is not democracy, it is a madhouse'.<sup>11</sup> After this introduction, Khrushchev continued: 'Even these hopeless people, however, do feel that the world is changing. We appreciate Johnson's realistic approach to the international situation, nor is McNamara the highwayman that he wishes to look like'.<sup>12</sup> According to Khrushchev, the German question was the main obstacle to the development of *détente*. 'You Swedes', he said, 'are evading this issue, by referring to your neutrality. To you, this question is like an autumn cold – it's better not to have it. Thus, you let your neighbours blow their noses'.<sup>13</sup> Outlining Sweden's position on the issue, Erlander pointed out that 'our stance on the German issue is one that is natural to a small state'.<sup>14</sup> Nilsson added: 'If you were representing 7 million people rather than 220 you would have spoken differently'.<sup>15</sup> From international issues, the participants now moved on to Soviet-Swedish relations. Trade relations were discussed, as well as questions concerning agriculture, the latter

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., l. 88.

<sup>10</sup> AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 53, p. 88, d. 9, l. 107.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., l. 107.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., l. 108.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., l. 109.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., l. 115.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



very important to Khrushchev. Also, matters such as cultural exchange and the development of a joint plan for research and development were discussed. The parties exchanged opinions on the subject of expanding air communications between the two countries. During the negotiations, much attention was devoted to the notorious problem of the Swedish ship *Bengt Sture*, as well as to the issue of individuals wanting to leave the USSR and settle in Sweden.

After the talks, Tage Erlander asked Khrushchev, Andrei Gromyko and Torsten Nilsson to stay for a few more minutes and suggested they move to his study. Apart from the persons already mentioned, Olof Palme attended this narrow-format session in the Prime Minister's personal study, as a Minister without Portfolio.<sup>16</sup> Erlander said that he once again would like to discuss the Wallenberg case, and referred to new information provided by the physician Nanna Swartz. Khrushchev replied that the Soviet side had nothing to add on the issue, and that it was impossible to 'resurrect' Wallenberg. He reminded his counterparts that the Swedish Ambassador to Moscow had previously received an answer on this case. He said he was puzzled that the Swedish side deemed it proper to continue this kind of questioning during a reciprocal visit to Sweden made by a Soviet head of state. 'If I had known that I would be lured to Sweden in order to answer this kind of questions, I would never come here', Khrushchev said, adding that 'anyway, he could leave as early as tomorrow'. Torsten Nilsson explained: the Swedes realised that Khrushchev could not be held responsible for things done before he had become head of the government, and wanted to end this conversation without any misunderstandings, i.e. 'as it takes place among friends'.<sup>17</sup>

In this short presentation I cannot offer a detailed discussion of all aspects of Khrushchev's visit to Sweden. Suffice it to say that it was successful. Nikita Sergeevich paid a visit to King Gustaf VI Adolph, delivered a speech in the Stockholm City Hall, met with the leaders of Swedish trade unions, visited Gothenburg, and acquainted himself with Swedish agriculture and industry. In his residence – the Haga Palace – he received the leaders of the Union of Swedish-Soviet Societies. He did not, however, have conversations with the new leader of the Swedish

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<sup>16</sup> AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 55, p. 211, d. 12, l. 83.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., l. 84.

Communist Party, Karl Hermansson, who was pursuing a policy that was independent of Moscow. At a reception, Khrushchev and Hermansson exchanged a few remarks and the idea of meeting and a talk was in fact expressed, but this plan was never carried out.

At the end of the visit, a Soviet-Swedish communiqué was approved, which summed up the results of the negotiations. A political statement from the Soviet Embassy, devoted to Khrushchev's visit to Sweden, emphasised that the Swedish public and press considered the most important result for Sweden to be a statement expressing the USSR's deep respect for Sweden's neutrality policy, a statement that was included in the official joint communiqué from the meetings.<sup>18</sup> The statement also stressed that the Swedish side expressed its satisfaction with the answer that Khrushchev, during the negotiations, gave about the fate of *Bengt Sture's* crew, an answer that he later handed over to the Swedes in written form.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet side appreciated the fact that the Swedes had not tried to include either the issue of *Bengt Sture* nor the Wallenberg case in the joint communiqué.

## Swedish double talk?

Soviet diplomatic documents that analysed relations with Sweden in the Khrushchev era often mention the 'duplicity' of Sweden's position towards the USSR. On the one hand, they emphasise, Soviet-Swedish relations were developing positively, bilateral political meetings took place in a peace-loving and friendly atmosphere and good neighbourhood policies were strengthening, which benefited both peoples and furthered the cause of peace. On the other hand, influenced by bourgeois political parties, especially the Conservatives, and by imperialist powers, primarily the US, the Swedish Social Democratic government was making 'attacks' on the USSR. The Raoul Wallenberg case and the Stig Vennerstrom affair were listed as issues 'clouding' bilateral relations.

Soviet policy towards the Scandinavian countries showed certain duplicity as well, however. For instance, besides having diplomatic contacts with the leaders of these countries, Moscow maintained its links with 'friends', i.e. the Communist parties. Furthermore, relations with

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<sup>18</sup> AVP RF, f. 0140, op. 55, p. 210, d. 1, l. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., l. 36.

these 'friends' involved not only discussions of decisions on issues relating to the international and national Communist movements, relations with these 'friends' included practical measures to further Soviet foreign policy.

## **Nordic cooperation – the Soviet attitude**

When we evaluate the Khrushchev period, we must include a discussion of the Soviet attitude to Nordic cooperation. During the Stalin era, Nordic cooperation had been considered a threat to Soviet interests in the North. In the Khrushchev era, however, it was perceived as a natural element of the Nordic countries' mutual relations, not a serious threat to Moscow. In documents prepared by the Soviet Foreign Ministry one finds ideas that support some kind of a neutral, Nordic alliance guaranteed by the great powers – after Norway and Denmark had left NATO, of course.

On his return from the Scandinavian trip, Khrushchev, 7 July, made a speech on Moscow radio and TV in which he gave an account of the trip. In this speech he argued that a neutrality policy would be 'the most reliable guarantee for these nations' security'. The idea of a neutral Scandinavian defence union, however, was not mentioned in this context. As we know, Khrushchev's ideas were never implemented in practice. But he obviously believed in the possibility of there being several other neutral countries in Northern Europe besides Finland and Sweden. As he saw it, Finland would pursue the 'best' possible neutrality policy from a Soviet point of view. Alliance-free Sweden was rated a second-best with regard to neutrality. Norway and Denmark ought to become neutral as well, i.e. terminate their membership in NATO. This, of course, hardly meant that Finland's neutrality resembled that of Sweden. Apparently, Khrushchev imagined that Norway and Denmark would subscribe to a 'positive neutrality' policy, similar to that of Sweden.

Khrushchev's trip to Scandinavia turned out to be his last visit to the Western world. In October 1964, a CPSU CC Plenum removed him from all posts and forced him into retirement. Khrushchev had for such a long time, including the period leading up to his visit to the Scandinavian countries, been hailed as a great leader. But now, over-

night, he was declared unfit for holding a high-ranking position. No reasons were given for this sudden metamorphosis. Some politicians, who had recently received Khrushchev with great hospitality, felt a certain embarrassment, which was enhanced by the widespread fears of a general change in Soviet international politics. The new Soviet leadership, however, took steps to make it clear that its foreign policy would remain unchanged.

When visiting Moscow in 1965, Tage Erlander could satisfy himself that Soviet foreign policy showed continuity, as was indicated by the fact that Gromyko had retained his position as Foreign Minister. This visit, however, as well as Soviet-Swedish relations in the subsequent period, may become the topic of another academic symposium – on bilateral relations in the Brezhnev era.

### **Concluding remarks**

As a conclusion I would like to also note that the history of Soviet-Swedish relations during the Khrushchev years requires further research: many aspects of this interesting topic have not yet been studied. As examples I can mention issues such as: the role played by Finland in Soviet-Swedish relations, Soviet attitudes to Swedish plans to develop nuclear weapons and to Swedish-American relations, Moscow's ties with 'friends', and contacts between the CPSU and the Swedish Social Democrats, trade unions etc.



## Chapter 6

### Khrushchev and Swedish Foreign Policy, 1953–1964. Preliminary Theses

*Krister Wahlbäck*

1. As the subtitle of my presentation indicates, the subject matter is not really my specialty. As a researcher, I have, for several years, been preparing a book that discusses Swedish foreign and security policy in the decade prior to the Khrushchev era, i.e. the period 1943–1953. As a practitioner, I did not join the Swedish Foreign Ministry until 1976, when the Khrushchev years figured only in discussions about the past. For this paper, the only unpublished source I have used is a voluminous manuscript on ‘Sweden’s Eastern Policy, 1945–1970’ by the Ministry’s in-house Sovietologist from 1950 to 1979, Dr. Stellan Bohm.<sup>1</sup> Of much greater importance are, of course, the papers left by Sweden’s top political leadership. The laconic diaries of Professor Östen Undén, Foreign Minister 1945–1962, have been published, while the publication of the extensive diaries of the Prime Minister from 1946 to 1969, Tage Erlander, is proceeding slowly and so far only covers the years 1946 to 1956.<sup>2</sup> In spite of these limitations, some observations may nevertheless be made.

2. Let me first sketch out Sweden’s foreign policy situation, as things stood when Stalin died in March 1953 and access to supreme power opened up for Khrushchev. I think one can argue that, by that time, the objectives that Erlander and Undén had in mind in the spring of 1948, when they launched their initiative to form a Scandinavian defence alliance separate from NATO, had largely been fulfilled, although their ini-

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<sup>1</sup> The type-written manuscript is now available in the Library of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> Östen Undén, *Anteckningar, 1952–1966* (utgivna genom Karl Molin), Stockholm: Kungl. Samf. för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 2002. Among Tage Erlander’s published diary volumes, only Erlander, *Dagböcker 1955*, (utgivna av Sven Erlander), Hedemora: Gidlund, 2005, and *Dagböcker 1956*, ed. by Sven Erlander, Hedemora: Gidlund, 2006, have been used for this paper.

tiative, of course, had failed. By 1953, the Nordic area had been established as one of relatively low tension. The two super-powers had no standing forces in the region. Norway and Denmark were protected by the American NATO guarantee, but they accepted no bases for allied troops on their territories<sup>3</sup>, even though their own defence forces were still negligible. In Finland, President Paasikivi and the Social Democrats had succeeded in reining in the Communists, who had been left out of the government after their defeat in the elections of July 1948 and who remained in opposition throughout the Khrushchev era. During the Korean boom, the wood-processing industry had a profitable time, to the great advantage of the entire Finnish economy. The last war reparations to the USSR had been paid in 1952, and that same year the Olympic Games in Helsinki had been the first major international manifestation since World War II of Finland's survival as an independent democracy, fully capable of successfully organising such a demanding event.

Thus, from Sweden's point of view, the Finnish buffer was indeed consolidating, although, of course, the paragraphs on Soviet military assistance in the Soviet-Finnish 1948 Treaty did remind everyone of the precariousness of Finland's position. From the point of view of Swedish security, the fact that our Nordic neighbours, both to the West and to the East, were intent on limiting the military presence of the super-powers on their territories was most important. Together with Sweden's own 'no alliance' policy<sup>4</sup>, this meant that the razor-sharp line of confrontation on the European continent did not extend northwards into the Nordic region. Moreover, these policies on the part of our neighbours were pursued by them themselves, on their own responsibility, without Sweden having assumed any military commitment vis-à-vis any of them. Thus, Sweden's security interests were perhaps better served by this outcome than would have been the case with a Scandinavian defence alliance.

In addition, by 1953 Sweden had reached a kind of understanding with the United States. This was based on the American acceptance of Swedish non-membership in NATO as a political fact, and a number of

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<sup>3</sup> There were caveats attached to their doctrines with regard to bases and nuclear weapons, however. 'The formula that was most relevant to the Swedes, the Norwegian one, applied as long as Norway was not attacked or exposed to a threat of attack'.

<sup>4</sup> The term in Swedish was 'alliansfrihet', which means, literally, 'freedom of alliances'.

Swedish secret peace-time preparations for possible military cooperation with Norway and Denmark and the Western powers in case of war.<sup>5</sup>

Towards the end of the Khrushchev decade, President Eisenhower even took a formal decision – top secret, of course – to have the US come to the military assistance of Sweden in case of a Soviet attack on the country. It is not clear whether the Swedish government had any knowledge of Eisenhower's decree. However, there is some evidence that the Swedish leadership was indeed informed at some point in time, and likewise was told that the ruling included nuclear back-up. This may have been part of a deal that entailed that the Swedes abandoned previous plans to develop their own tactical nuclear weapons, an idea that the Americans disliked, in view of their non-proliferation policies.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the other super-power, it might be argued that Sweden by 1953 had reached a kind of accord with Moscow, as well. True, the legacy of recent controversies – from the arrest and imprisonment of Raoul Wallenberg in 1945 to the 1952 downing of a Swedish military aircraft over international waters in the Baltic Sea – still weighed heavily on the relationship. But already during Stalin's last years, the Soviet ambassador Admiral Rodionov had displayed a more

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<sup>5</sup> For the 1949–1969 period, these preparations were first accounted for in a unanimous 1994 report of a Commission appointed by the non-Socialist Government and consisting of three of Sweden's foremost professors of modern political history, one of them a well-known Social Democrat. Their Report is available in a full translation in English (*Had There Been a War – : Preparations for the Reception of Military Assistance 1949–1969. Report of the Commission on Neutrality Policy*, Neutralitetspolitikkommissionen, Stockholm: Fritze, 1994). An attempt to revise their conclusions was made by a one-man investigation, performed by a diplomat without any background in research, appointed by the Social Democratic Government in 1999 and mainly dealing with the 1969–1994 period, *Fred och säkerhet: Svensk säkerhetspolitik 1969–89*, Säkerhetspolitiska utredningen, Stockholm: Fritzes offentliga publikationer, 2002. This report is available in a later, abridged and sanitized English version, *Peace and security. Swedish security policy 1969–89. Abridged version and translation of SOU 2002:108. Report from the Inquiry on Security Policy*, Stockholm: Fritzes offentliga publikationer, 2004. This investigator subsequently intensified his criticism of the 1992–1994 Commission (Rolf Ekéus: 'Mytbildning kring neutralitetspolitiken', *Internationella studier*, Stockholm, Utrikespolitiska institutet, 2005:1). The deficiencies in Ambassador Ekéus's endeavors to do serious research have been best analyzed by an independent researcher, Robert Dalsjö, in his Ph.D. thesis at King's College, London, *Life-Line Lost: The Rise and Fall of 'Neutral' Sweden's Secret Reserve Option of Wartime Help from the West*, Stockholm: Santérus Academic Press, 2006. Dalsjö also adds valuable information on the 1949–1969 period, mainly on the basis of documents not available to the 1992–1994 Commission.

<sup>6</sup> Dalsjö, *Life-Line Lost*, 2006, pp. 172–174.



relaxed attitude than his predecessor. In late March 1953, the new leadership in Moscow decided to accept Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary General of the United Nations. This was a gesture of goodwill towards Sweden's Deputy Foreign Minister, whose active pursuit of Swedish security policy cooperation with the West may well have been observed by Moscow, which might be interpreted as a sign of Soviet acceptance of Sweden's security policy as a political fact.<sup>7</sup>

3. This fairly positive, perhaps self-congratulatory sketch of Sweden's security policy position in the spring of 1953 is, of course, a post-facto description, influenced by what we now know about developments during the following decades. At the time, the Swedish decision-makers were certainly less confident, less inclined to look upon the position of Sweden and her neighbours in this optimistic light. Rather they were worried that something might happen that could upset the 'Nordic Balance', to use an expression that became popular only in the 1960's. They were looking for ways in which Sweden could somehow contribute to reducing the risk that external developments in strategic and military matters, or in international politics, might cause a breakdown of the Nordic pattern. Signs of the Soviet Union's domestic policy moving in a 'liberal' direction and its foreign policy getting less confrontational were eagerly welcomed.

4. Khrushchev made two important decisions that affected the Nordic system. First, in 1955, he returned the Soviet military base in Porkkala, west of Helsinki, to the Finns, some forty years before the lease was stipulated to end, according to the 1944 armistice, which had been confirmed in the 1947 Paris peace treaty with Finland. Also, he accepted the 'neutrality' label on Finnish foreign policy. In both cases, the moves were part of a global scheme to buttress his campaign against US bases around the world, and to increase Soviet influence among Asian and African countries in the 'non-aligned' movement. Yet these moves had their own effects on the Nordic context.

For a country in Finland's geopolitical position, and with a bilateral treaty of assistance with its mighty neighbour, 'neutrality' was bound to

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<sup>7</sup> Krister Wahlbäck, 'Nytt ljus över Hammarskjöld', *Internationella Studier* 2006:1, pp. 20 ff.

serve as an instrument of emancipation. It was skilfully used by the Finns to interpret the 1948 Treaty in ways that would make it less at odds with Finnish neutrality. The Finns were moving towards greater independence, slowly and carefully. President Kekkonen, who succeeded Paasikivi in 1956, covered his path by imposing a domestic, conformist pro-Soviet attitude, and by presenting one or two abortive international initiatives that seemed to favour Soviet interests.

Khrushchev's second significant input came in October 1961, when he had Foreign Minister Gromyko deliver a note to the Finns proposing Soviet-Finnish 'consultations' in accordance with the 1948 Treaty. The note referred to a threat to Finland posed by West German rearmament and to the complicity of Finland's Scandinavian neighbours in facilitating a West German military role in the region. This was shortly after the Berlin crisis had intensified and the Wall had been erected, but during previous post-1948 crises, Moscow had not advanced any such proposal. After some weeks of tense uncertainty, President Kekkonen managed, when meeting Khrushchev in Novosibirsk, to convince him to postpone his proposal. There has been much speculation about the real motives behind the Soviet initiative.<sup>8</sup> The lasting effects are clear enough, however. By providing President Kekkonen with this spectacular success, Moscow confirmed his grip on power in Finland for the next twenty years. Second, the 'Note Crisis' made every Nordic politician aware of the interplay between NATO and West German military roles in Denmark and Norway, on the one hand, and, on the other, Soviet pressure on Finland.

5. This cut both ways, however. Shortly before the Novosibirsk meeting, the Norwegian Minister of Defence had publicly warned that if Moscow believed it could force Norway out of NATO by putting pressure on Finland, it should realize that the effect might well be to push Norway deeper into NATO. According to the communiqué, after Khrushchev's meeting with the Finnish president, Kekkonen had argued that the proposed consultations would create 'war hysteria' in

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<sup>8</sup> The best account of the 1961 'Note Crisis', as well as of Finland's general political situation in the 1944–1964 period, is Max Jakobson's latest volume, published in 2003, of which I have used the Swedish translation, Max Jacobson, *År av fruktan och hopp*, Stockholm, Atlantis 204.

Scandinavia – a code word mainly for a Norwegian reappraisal of their policies with regard to allied military bases.

The concept of the 'Nordic balance' emerged after this experience. It did not enter the official vocabulary, as the Norwegian government did not wish to support the notion that their freedom of action was somehow limited by concern for their neighbour's position, while the Finnish government wanted to avoid giving the impression that NATO measures in Norway would somehow legitimize Soviet proposals for a military role in Finland. Clearly, however, it was not a symmetrical situation. While the Norwegian government, in most cases, genuinely wished to increase the prospects of NATO supporting Norway in case of a crisis or war, employing measures that Norway was currently discussing with its NATO allies, it would only reluctantly and occasionally take into consideration the risks that this might entail for Finland. The Finns, on the other hand, did not want any Soviet military role in Finland at all. Moreover, they were only too happy if the Soviets hesitated to pursue ideas about Soviet-Finnish military cooperation, as this could lead to possible repercussions in Scandinavia. Still, this lack of symmetry did not seem to prevent the 'Nordic balance' from working.<sup>9</sup>

At this time, the Swedish government was facing the dilemma of deciding to what extent – if at all – Sweden should make it clear to Moscow that her own policies would be affected by developments in Finland, i.e. that increased cooperation with NATO or even membership might result if Moscow pushed Finland too hard. In a confidential talk and in general terms, such a hint had been made by Foreign Minister Undén already back in the spring of 1948 when the Soviet-Finnish treaty had been negotiated.<sup>10</sup> But public statements were another matter.

Prime Minister Erlander, who visited Helsinki early in the critical November weeks of 1961, said in an interview that he could not imagine

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<sup>9</sup> For an excellent analysis of the concept, see Robert Dalsjö, 'Tungt vägande kritik? En granskning av kritik mot teorin om nordisk balans', *Militärhistorisk tidskrift* 1987, pp. 131–185.

<sup>10</sup> To quote Undén's comment to the Finnish ambassador to Stockholm on 15 April 1948: he had told the Soviet ambassador that even those Swedes who wanted Finland to strive in every possible way towards good relations with the Soviet Union attached the greatest weight to Finland's independence and would never accept the use of violent measures against Finland. 'Such measures, which he himself could not imagine possible, would make the deepest impression everywhere' (Krister Wahlbäck, 'G.A. Gripenberg i Stockholm 1943–1956', *Kungl. Krigsvetenskapsakademiens handlingar och tidskrift*, 2003:3, p. 89.)

that the Soviet note was intended to express a ‘tough policy’, and that he had noted President Kekkonen’s strong emphasis on neutrality in the latter’s speech on 5 November. ‘All speculations of a more or less sensational nature about what position Sweden would take in the future are therefore quite unnecessary.’<sup>11</sup> This was either an unintended slip of the tongue or a misunderstanding on part of the journalist, as Erlander had not wished to make such a relatively explicit link. However, as the interview had immediately been hailed in the Finnish press as statesmanlike, it could not be retracted.<sup>12</sup> In Stockholm on 15 November, Erlander told one of Kekkonen’s closest advisors, Max Jakobson, that he had been criticized for not expressly warning the Soviets that a change in Finland’s position would force Sweden to reconsider her foreign policy. Jakobson replied that Finnish interests were best served by the Swedish government publicly taking it for granted that Finland’s position would remain unchanged. As for the Swedish press, Jakobson thought it would be much worse if they gave the impression that Sweden would not mind what happened to Finland.<sup>13</sup>

The traumatic effects of the Soviet note are best illustrated by the immediate reaction of the normally unexcitable Foreign Minister, as recorded in his diary: ‘Could this be the prelude to a repeat of the events of 1939?’ After the crisis had passed, the Foreign Minister, in a statement in the Parliament, preferred to affirm that his government had not shared the fears at the time, since it could not believe that the Soviet government could be ignorant of how important it was to preserve Finland’s status, with regard to her foreign and defence policies, if one were to preserve the stability of the Nordic area.<sup>14</sup>

Let me add that the effects of Khrushchev’s 1961 initiative were very much in evidence fifteen years later when I joined the Foreign Ministry. The stipulation in the 1948 Treaty about ‘consultations’ in case of a threat to Finland, or to the Soviet Union through Finnish territory, on the part of ‘Germany or her allies’ was present in any serious

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<sup>11</sup> *Documents on Swedish foreign policy*, published by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Utrikesdepartementet. Aktstycken, 1953–1961, Stockholm: Allmänna förlaget, New Series, I:C:11.

<sup>12</sup> Tage Erlander, *1960-talet. Samtal med Arvid Lagercrantz*, Stockholm: Tiden, 1982, p. 154.

<sup>13</sup> Jakobson, *År av fruktan*, 2004, p. 335; Max Jakobson, *Den finländska paradoxen. Linjer i Finlands utrikespolitik 1953–1965*, Helsingfors: Schildt, 1982, p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy 1962*, I:C:12, p. 21.

internal discussion on Nordic security, right up to Gorbachev's time. That would hardly have been the case had not Khrushchev, with his initiative, once forcefully illustrated the possibility of this process being set in motion.

6. So far I have described at length the Swedish perspective on Nordic security. But was Khrushchev himself at all aware of these intricate calculations? Did the details of the security policy situation in the Nordic region interest him, or were they, with few exceptions, a matter for his bureaucrats in the military, in the party and in the MID? We will not know for sure, of course, until the Soviet source material becomes available. But in my view all facts seem to indicate that while he shared the traditional Soviet wish to see Norway and Denmark leave NATO, the hope that Sweden would move her neutrality in a 'Finnish' direction, and that Finland keep greater distance to the West, he did not want at all to force these issues. As for the details, he does not seem to have bothered much about these.

We should of course be careful in drawing any conclusions from his memoirs. Still, it is worth noting that when he describes his visit in Norway in 1964, he makes no note at all of the beneficial effect on Norwegian policies of one of his major personal shows: his furious public reaction to the U-2 flight in 1960. The Bodø airport in northern Norway was Gary Powers' destination as he took off from Peshawar in Pakistan. Khrushchev launched a public attack on Norway, including a threat of retaliatory attacks. The Americans had not informed Norwegian authorities properly about their flights, which caused the Norwegian government to impose a substantial tightening of the rules that regulated US use of their airports.<sup>15</sup> We must assume that the Soviets observed this change and that Khrushchev was informed accordingly. Yet he does not make any reference to this success of his when he describes the visit to Norway in his otherwise fairly self-important memoirs.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, Khrushchev focused on relations with the US and major NATO powers, China and perhaps some other states. As for Sweden and

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<sup>15</sup> Rolf Tamnes, *The United States and the Cold War in the High North*, Oslo: ad Notam, 1991, pp. 179–184.

<sup>16</sup> *Khrushchev Remembers*, translated and edited by Strobe Talbott, vol 2, *The Last Testament*, Penguin Books 1977, pp. 587–591.

the other Nordic countries, they may perhaps have been of some interest to him as examples of how little the toothless Social Democrats could or would do to crush capitalism, while being able to make astonishing progress in perfecting a welfare system and awe-inspiring agricultural production. But the Swedish accounts of discussions with Khrushchev give no indication of him having grasped the reasons for either successes, or that he for a moment considered trying to emulate their methods in the way Gorbachev seems to have had in mind thirty years later. Nor is there any indication in Erlander's or Undén's diaries that the Swedish Social Democrats made any effort to enlighten him when they met. Capitalism and free enterprise (reined in, of course, in the normal West European way) were the indispensable basis for their whole enterprise, but the Social Democratic leaders either did not want to acknowledge this even among themselves, or preferred the easy way of posturing as fellow socialists in front of Khrushchev.

This play with words seems to have suited Khrushchev well. When the Swedish ambassador to Moscow, at the New Year reception in 1956, told Khrushchev that most Swedes expected that there would be a further development 'in what we consider a socialist direction', Khrushchev replied: 'Please do as you like... In countries like yours, I think that socialism can be introduced through parliamentary decisions, even though it would be much quicker through revolution'.<sup>17</sup>

7. Prime Minister Erlander's visit to the Soviet Union in April 1956 and Khrushchev's scheduled but cancelled return visit in connection with his intended Scandinavian tour in 1959, had two important effects.

First, Erlander managed to convince Khrushchev that if a good relationship with Sweden was to be established, the issue of Raoul Wallenberg would have to be addressed seriously. As a Swedish diplomat in Budapest in 1944, Wallenberg had saved thousands of Hungarian Jews. This made him a humanitarian hero whose fate could not be ignored. In February 1957, after much internal discussion, Foreign Minister Gromyko produced a new Soviet version, which took the place of the one that Vyshinsky had given the Swedes in August 1947. Gromyko admitted that Wallenberg had indeed been kept in Soviet

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<sup>17</sup> Stellan Bohm, type written manuscript.

prisons from early February 1945. According to a recently discovered note, written by the head of the Lubianka medical services, Wallenberg had regrettably died in July 1947, Gromyko stated.

Thus it at least became clear what had happened to Wallenberg after the Soviet take-over in Budapest in January 1945. The Soviet confession may have come as a painful surprise to Foreign Minister Undén, who had not really tried to get Wallenberg released in 1945–47. In 1946 he had even allowed his ambassador to Moscow, when he paid his farewell visit to Stalin, to tell him that robbers in Hungary had probably killed Wallenberg and that it would be fine if Sweden received a report stating that the Soviet authorities had not found him. However, in February 1957 Undén was more tight-lipped than ever and gave no hint of his own thoughts when he wrote his diary notes about the Soviet memorandum.

Later, new information indicating that Wallenberg may have been alive after 1947 caused Erlander to again raise the issue with Khrushchev in 1961 (through Sweden's ambassador) and in 1964 when Khrushchev finally arrived on his official visit. On both occasions, Khrushchev reacted very angrily, accusing the Swedes of keeping the Wallenberg issue alive simply to promote anti-Soviet propaganda.<sup>18</sup>

With respect to the secondary important effect of the diplomacy of official visits, Khrushchev's cancellation of his 1959 trip brought about a significant change in Sweden's official security policy doctrine. Eventually, it also seems to have contributed to a change in the security policy itself.

In the MID memorandum that announced the cancellation on 19 July, the Soviet government expressed surprise that there had been such an unfriendly campaign against Khrushchev's forthcoming visit and that the Swedish government had failed to counter this campaign. Undén then decided that the chairman of the Conservative party, Mr. Hjalmarson, who had made several very critical comments about the visit, claiming that it merely provided a propaganda platform for the leader of an inhuman system, could no longer represent his party as a

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<sup>18</sup> The best account of the Wallenberg case during the entire 1944–2001 period is in the 2003 Report of an official Commission, composed almost entirely by professional researchers: *Ett diplomatiskt misslyckande. Fallet Raoul Wallenberg och den svenska utrikespolitiken*, Statens offentliga utredningar 2003:18, Stockholm: Fritzes offentliga publikationer, 2003.

parliamentary member of the Swedish UN delegation to the General Assembly in the autumn of 1959. In defence of this decision in Parliament, Prime Minister Erlander laid down some new rules for the conduct of Sweden's policy of neutrality.

Apart from requiring that influential politicians show moderation in public comments about the policies of the big powers, Erlander also declared that Swedish preparations for military cooperation with members of a military alliance in case of war were out of the question if Sweden was to preserve its credibility as a neutral country. The effect of this new principle was to lock out Hjalmarson from the Swedish 'neutrality consensus', as he had recently argued in public in favour of such preparations. Apparently, Erlander felt a need to extend his criticism of Hjalmarson by thus adding the issue of security policy. He did this in order to avoid focusing solely on the requirement of moderation in public speeches, an argument that had not been well received by Swedish media, including some Social Democratic papers.<sup>19</sup>

However that may be, Erlander's chosen formulation with reference to the inadmissibility of any preparations for military cooperation did not square with the facts. Thus he placed himself in a potentially risky position. Not in relation to the Swedish public, who knew nothing of the preparations that Erlander had actually authorized. Nor in relation to Mr. Hjalmarson, who was also in the dark, or too loyal to reveal what he may have known. But the Western powers knew quite a lot, of course, and so in fact did the Soviet Union. Moscow's most important spy in Sweden, Colonel Wennerström, who was not arrested until 1963, had been among the very few Swedish officers in the know, at least with regard to air force cooperation.<sup>20</sup>

But Erlander's gamble paid off. The Conservatives were defeated in the 1960 elections, mainly because of their domestic policy, but to some

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<sup>19</sup> Had There Been a War, 1994, pp. 53–56, 267–268, Carl Bildt, 'Sveriges regering och Sovjetunionens ockupation av Tjeckoslovakien 1968', *Brobyggare: en vänbok till Nils Andén*, Göteborg: Nerenius & Santérus, 1997, pp. 162–164. There is also a book-length study by Ulf Bjereld, *Hjalmarson-affären: Ett politiskt drama i tre akter*, Stockholm, Nerenius & Santérus, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> At present there is, of course, no way of knowing whether Wennerström's reports surprised the Soviet military or only confirmed what they had already taken for granted, given the character of Swedish society. We shall have to wait for access to Soviet military archives in order to be able to assess this important issue.



extent because of internal dissent about the wisdom of Hjalmarson's foreign policy profile. Hjalmarson hereafter chose to retire. The Western powers had no reason to expose the Prime Minister by leaking information about the real situation. True, Erlander had made himself vulnerable to blackmail, in particular from the side of the British Conservative government, which, in theory, might have threatened to bring about his resignation by leaking sensitive documents illustrating some of the Swedish preparations for military cooperation that he had approved (for instance, his Defence Minister Voug's 1951 paper to the British describing Sweden's war planning).<sup>21</sup> But there is not the slightest indication that the British ever considered using such less than gentlemanly methods. Their only interest – and the only interest of the Swedish military leaders – was to see the preparations being carried on, which indeed they were for many more years.

In the long run, however, the Swedish supreme commanders found it too risky to keep up the preparations in view of the increased domestic political price that the Swedish government – and maybe they themselves – would have to pay in case of a major leak. In the wake of the *détente* and the Swedish-US controversies over Vietnam and other international issues, this price was apparently deemed to have become prohibitively high. Of course, this happened many years after Khrushchev's resignation.<sup>22</sup>

But with regard to the immediate effects on Sweden's public security policy doctrine, Khrushchev was presumably informed about the results of his 1959 cancellation. If so, he may have felt some wry satisfaction at his own cunning. As he tells us in his memoirs, the whole story of his anger at the campaign in Sweden was only a pretext. He had a far more important reason to cancel his Nordic tour: in mid-July, Eisenhower had invited him to the US. 'Of course we were more eager to visit the United States', he writes, and 'we had a ready excuse to postpone our visit to Scandinavia' by referring to the unfriendly comments in Sweden.<sup>23</sup>

True to form, Khrushchev seems to have enjoyed elaborating on his pretext and confusing the Swedes by putting more blame on the Swedish

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<sup>21</sup> The Voug paper and its consequences are dealt with in *Had There Been a War*, 1994, pp. 150–155.

<sup>22</sup> Dalsjö, *Life-Line Lost*, 2006, p. 258.

<sup>23</sup> *Khrushchev Remembers*, 1977, p. 426. Strangely enough, this statement is not mentioned in the only book-length study of the Hjalmarson affair that exists (note 19).

government's failure to counter the criticism than on the campaign itself when addressing a press conference on 5 August. Perhaps we might have Professor Sergei Khrushchev's comment on this supposition of mine – wouldn't this have tallied with your father's sense of humour? Be that as it may, Undén could only vent his irritation by complaining, in his diary, about Khrushchev's 'careless' comments (6 August), which of course did not improve the prospects for his own measures against Hjalmarson. But perhaps Undén should have been thankful that it was only in his memoirs that Khrushchev revealed the full story of his craftiness.

8. To judge from his diaries, Undén resented Khrushchev's behaviour, above all when the latter attacked Dag Hammarskjöld at the UN in the autumn of 1960. 'I'm not at all glad to go to New York', he wrote 26 September 1960. 'Khrushchev is behaving like a bully and making a fuss without anyone knowing what he aims at... I want to say something about Hammarskjöld who is being subjected to the crudest attacks by Khrushchev.' A year later, on 31 August, when the Soviet Union announced its intention to resume nuclear testing, Undén was clearly indignant and puzzled about the Soviet Union's motives. He thought that perhaps a French spokesman was right in saying that 'Khrushchev wants to create a maximum of tension as a means of extortion'. This was, of course, at the height of the Berlin crisis. On that issue, however, Undén was not very far from sharing Khrushchev's position. Talking to Queen Ingrid of Denmark on 7 September, he noted that she held roughly the same views as he did. 'Berlin as a West German enclave in East Germany is untenable in the long run. Best to evacuate the whole of West Berlin.'

It is not easy, however, to piece together a coherent picture of Undén's views on Khrushchev on the basis of his diary notes. Comments on the system he represented are rare, even when that system was shaken by internal crises. There is no mention of the East Berlin uprising in June 1953 or the Poznan revolt in June 1956. At the early stage of the Hungarian revolution Undén did note, 'The will to resist has obviously not been suffocated in spite of many years' repression' (24 October). As for Khrushchev personally, the closest Undén came to a summing up was when, after his resignation as Foreign Minister, he met with Khrushchev in Stockholm at a dinner party on 22 June 1964, during

Khrushchev's Scandinavian tour. 'The world needs you', Undén said, adding that he very much set his hope on new Soviet ideas on disarmament as a means of making progress at the Geneva Commission.

With respect to Erlander, the diaries that are so far published deal mostly with his trip to Russia in April 1956. At the outset, he hesitated when he learned that his visit, following upon those of his Norwegian and Danish colleagues, might lead to a return visit by Khrushchev, not on the latter's journey back from Britain as originally planned, but as part of a separate Nordic tour ('not a very tempting prospect', 23 December 1955). Next, he worried about not being able to prepare properly for his visit. 'I have to get some time to prepare before we are sitting on the plane', he wrote, 'quite remarkable things seem to happen over there to judge by the speeches at the Communist party congress' (28 March 1956). He also regretted not having consulted the parliamentary Foreign Policy Council. 'If we had invited Hitler in the 30's there would obviously have been deliberations with the opposition and the Foreign Policy Council' (9 and 27 March).<sup>24</sup> Finally, he worried about what to do if the Soviets refused to discuss the Raoul Wallenberg case. In that case, his personal inclination was to decline any bilateral communiqué but several of his ministers thought otherwise – 'We must behave towards the Russians as we do towards other states. Believe what they say' (28 March).

In the end, all turned out quite well, even though Erlander suffered from a heavy cold. 'We should be quite satisfied with our work in Moscow... The Russians have treated us quite fairly indeed' (3 April). The informal style introduced by Khrushchev did not fail to impress Erlander, as it did other visitors from the West who had suffered long years of dull Stalinist conformity. In his memoirs he describes how Khrushchev constantly interrupted Prime Minister Bulganin's luncheon toast for Erlander with his own loud comments. Finally Bulganin lost patience and said that he particularly wished to congratulate Erlander for being Party Chairman as well as Prime Minister: 'When you give speeches, you are not interrupted by the Party Chairman.'<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> It is not entirely impossible that the parallel with Hitler in the 1930's was in fact made not by Erlander himself but by one of the opposition leaders, although such an interpretation seems unlikely considering the way in which Erlander normally quoted remarks made by his interlocutors.

<sup>25</sup> Tage Erlander, *Tage Erlander 1955–1960*, Stockholm: Tiden, 1976, p. 306.

It was, of course, of greater importance that Erlander succeeded in convincing Khrushchev that the Soviets must deal in earnest with the Wallenberg case. Erlander's diary shows that he decided, at an early point, to bring up the issue, 'not only formally but very seriously indeed' (22 December 1955). It was with some displeasure that he later noted that Undén, on the other hand, did not consider this issue 'a point of disagreement' that should be on the Swedish-Soviet agenda for Erlander's Moscow visit (20 March 1956).

Erlander was deeply engaged in the Hungarian revolution. 'I have not been able to get away from the accounts of the Hungarian miracle. How did it happen? Or has it not happened, this apparent triumph of liberty?' (29 October 1956). After the British-French 'criminal attack' on Egypt, he observed: 'What a moral triumph for the Russians if they can set free their satellites while England behaves like this!' (31 October). The disillusionment came in less than a week. 'Thank God, my heart has not hardened by the events in all these years of public service. Faced with Russian slyness and brutality I still have the ability to react. It is another matter that my position forces me to restrain my feelings. But at least there is something there to restrain' (5 November). The usual differences between Erlander and Undén came to light when they were drafting a reply to questions in Parliament about whether the government now really intended to follow up on the invitation to Khrushchev to visit Sweden in June 1956, an invitation that the latter had accepted. Undén's draft was 'much softer', Erlander noted, than his own, 'which would have signified a courteous 'no' to the visit' (7 November). But in the end Undén's alternative, to postpone the visit, was accepted.

9. Dr. Stellan Bohm (1913–1986) is one of those personalities whose influence is hard to gauge in retrospect. Exceedingly modest, almost shy in his demeanour, he preferred to stay in his office, trying to decipher the subtext and implications of Soviet papers and documents. However, he certainly didn't mind discussing Soviet policies with colleagues when, at times, he was asked to come and see one of the senior officials, or, far more often, when younger colleagues knocked on his door (which was thick, padded and sound-proof). He listened carefully to their questions and gave his views in cautious understatements. He never circulated his papers, but he might give a copy of one of them to those who came to see

him. He frequently visited Moscow, having established a close professional relationship with Rolf Sohlman, Sweden's ambassador from 1947 to 1963.<sup>26</sup>

Bohm is not even mentioned in Undén's diaries. This does not mean that he did not carry weight with the Ministry's officials, however. Bohm's standing seems to have increased after the early summer of 1962, when he impressed Dr. Henry Kissinger. During a visit to Washington to see US experts, Bohm asked Kissinger what the US would do if the Soviets deployed intermediate nuclear missiles in Cuba. Kissinger brushed aside his question as absurd, but after the events in October, he never forgot the episode. As late as in 1977, Kissinger, now writing his memoirs, accepted a dinner invitation to Joseph Alsop in order to meet Bohm in a small circle of Alsop's visiting friends.<sup>27</sup> In the late 1970's, Bohm put together an 800-page typewritten manuscript on 'Sweden's Eastern Policies, 1950–1970', a mixture of memoir and analysis, in which he did find room for giving some clear verdicts. Though written without the author having access to the diaries of Undén and Erlander, this work is the only serious record of the Khrushchev years written by a Swedish insider. Thus it seems fair to present here at least part of Bohm's interpretation of Khrushchev, focusing on the first years of Khrushchev's time in power.

An economist by training, Bohm interpreted Khrushchev's policies as being dictated by the need to reduce Soviet military outlays in order to satisfy the Soviet consumers, without reducing investments too much. Military expenses could be limited only if the West was induced to rein in the enormous rearmament programs, themselves triggered by Stalin's miscalculation when he unleashed the Korean war 1950–53. Khrushchev's rhetorical tools were the doctrine of peaceful coexistence and his *détente* policy. He argued that the increasing strength of the Socialist camp justified this policy. The *détente* policy required a series of concessions, which however must not be extended to the crucial issue of Germany. When Khrushchev, in 1955, became Number One, the attempts to prevent German rearmament had already failed, and it was

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<sup>26</sup> Ambassadors Lars Bergquist and Jan Lundvik, Heads of the Eastern Department in 1973–1978, to the author.

<sup>27</sup> Ambassador Mats Bergquist, Councillor at the Swedish Embassy in Washington 1976–1981, to the author.

time for a new series of accommodating moves: the recognition of West Germany and the invitation extended to Adenauer to visit Moscow, the Canossa trip to Tito, the Austrian State Treaty, a number of disarmament proposals, and the restitution of the Porkkala base.

If this was Khrushchev's logic, Dr. Bohm did not think highly of the way he applied it. He admits that until the very end of 1954 he couldn't believe that 'this little chubby fellow' with his bizarre conduct and crude demagogic speeches could possibly become the leader of the Soviet Union. Bohm suspected that the dramatic speed with which Khrushchev instituted foreign policy reversals was due to a sincere belief that his demagoguery was as effective internationally as it had proved to be domestically. His initiatives did not seem well prepared, but rather expressed his penchant for manoeuvring quickly and taking risks. 'His exalted mood' may have contributed to the speech he gave about Stalin behind closed doors during the 1956 party congress. When, in early June 1956, the full text became available, it took some time for Bohm to accept it as a genuine version of the speech, which, he thought, must endanger the stability of the Soviet system. Poznan and Gomulka's accession to power were handled with a 'helplessness and inefficiency' which confirmed Khrushchev's failure to prepare for the consequences of his denouncement of Stalin. During the Hungarian revolution, a string of contradictory statements and actions confirmed Bohm's critical assessment.

He extended this criticism to Erlander and Undén. These argued that Soviet security interests would have been better served by a neutral Hungary, pursuing policies similar to those of Austria and the Nordic states. 'However much you may criticize Soviet brutality in Hungary, one must ask whether a Russian retreat would not have unleashed a chain reaction to the south-east, and whether the Soviet intervention did not save the Eastern bloc from collapse?' If we assume that Erlander and Undén believed what they said, the crux of Bohm's disagreement with them was his doubt that the Communist system could survive even in the Soviet Union, once a major retreat started at the periphery.

Khrushchev did not fully grasp the extent of this risk until very late, and as for Erlander and Undén, Bohm was of the opinion that they perhaps had taken the statements in the Swedish-Soviet communiqué produced during Erlander's Moscow visit – about respect for the indepen-

dence and integrity of UN member states and non-interference in their domestic affairs – seriously.

To Bohm, the Sputnik shock was a well-deserved repudiation of all those Western observers who had consistently underestimated Soviet capabilities. Yet, by bragging, Khrushchev had foolishly exaggerated the Sputnik's significance as a demonstration of Soviet technological progress. By doing this, he accelerated US efforts to catch up in space technology. In Bohm's view, it is possible that Khrushchev actually believed in his own rhetoric about the Soviet Union being an equal of the US, and he notes that well-placed Western observers began to warn of some worrying features in Khrushchev's personality – unpredictability and lack of balance – which could spell trouble during the Sputnik diplomacy which Khrushchev now engaged in.

In Bohm's view, the 'Sputnik boom' in Khrushchev's foreign policy lasted until the autumn of 1962. Its 'militant phase' began in November 1958 with Khrushchev's Berlin statement, which bordered on being an ultimatum. With this statement he intended to force the West to accept a status quo situation in Germany, the DDR and East Central Europe. In Bohm's view, this was a defensive move, though it was executed in such a clumsy manner that it gave additional credence to Western fears of Soviet expansionism. Thus Khrushchev once more attested to the scepticism of the deeply conservative Bohm, who cared for stability and found Khrushchev's unconventional, ebullient style irrelevant to his judgment of him.

10. Twenty years of Brezhnevite stability-cum-stagnation changed the perspective of most Swedish Soviet-watchers. As Professor Taubman reminded us, Gorbachev considered himself and his generation to be 'children of the Twentieth Congress', although Gorbachev thought that Khrushchev had not gone far enough in analysing the roots of Stalinism, and that Khrushchev's attempt to ease the Cold War had been contradictory and self-defeating.<sup>28</sup> The ultimate irony, in a way, is that the fate of the Soviet Union was, in the end, decided not by the well-educated and well-mannered Gorbachev, but by Yeltsin, who displayed even more Khrushchev-like blustering impulsiveness and human weaknesses. Who

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, New York: W.W. Norton 2003, p. 648.

should be regarded as Khrushchev's true heir – Gorbachev, who seems to have believed that the Soviet Union and its socialist camp could be reformed and kept running without resorting to violence, or Yeltsin, who clearly thought that Russia's future, thirty years after Khrushchev, required much more radical reappraisals of past dogmas?





## Chapter 7.

# Östen Undén, the Soviet Peace Offensive and the Swedish Foreign Policy Debate

*Karl Molin*

### Introduction

Östen Undén, Swedish Foreign Minister 1945–1962, is often referred to as the founding father of Sweden's policy of neutrality. As this policy was, it seems, unanimously supported by all major political parties, one might expect Undén himself to have been beyond criticism. This, however, was far from being the case. His long experience in working on international missions, starting with the League of Nations in the mid-twenties, did ensure him great esteem in all circles, as did his academic career as a professor of law and ultimately as chancellor of the Swedish universities. But his public appearances were often vehemently criticized, at least by the right-wing press.

In the following, I will present a few factors that might help us understand why Undén was controversial. After a brief outline of some general features of the Social Democratic debate on international relations in the 1950s, and a discussion of several structural aspects of the political discourse of the 1950s, I will analyze Undén's understanding of his own role as Foreign Minister.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Modes of thought in the Swedish foreign policy debate

In the following three lines of thought will be summarized. They were pervasive in the Social Democratic political environment to which Undén belonged.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a report from a work in progress. Östen Undén and the foreign policy debate have been dealt with in several recent publications. For later discussions on this, see Bjereld, U., Johansson, A. W. and Molin, K., *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred. Svensk utrikespolitik under kalla kriget*, Stockholm: Santérus, 2008.

### *A balance of power perspective*

At the end of the Second World War, a benevolent and optimistic view of the Soviet Union was rather pervasive in Sweden, especially in Social Democratic circles. Östen Undén, then newly-appointed Foreign Minister, was no exception when he claimed that the Soviet Union, if treated like any other great power, would respond with constructive contributions to peace.<sup>2</sup>

As in the rest of the Western world, such ideas soon lost ground to an entirely different conception of the nature of Soviet power. This development can readily be observed in *Tiden*, the Social Democratic journal of ideological debate. From the late 1940s and onwards, *Tiden* mirrored a growing fear of Sweden's neighbouring great power. Anxiety reached its peak during the Korean War, when the Soviet Union was described as an expansive, 'unfettered giant', ready to strike in all directions. When Aneurin Bevan was debarred from the British government in April 1951 and made a speech attacking British rearmament, *Tiden* sided with his adversaries. It protested when Bevan argued that the Communist threat in Asia should be met with foreign aid, not arms. The idea might hold in theory, but it could not divert the short-term Communist threat.

However, this pessimistic view of Soviet foreign policy was not based on the assumption that Communist aggression was inevitable and permanent. Rather, *Tiden* defined the problem as Western military and political weakness, which had caused an imbalance. The remedy – rearmament and political toughness – was not described in terms of ideological crusading, but as *Realpolitik*.

This view entailed a fundamental acceptance of the US's military and political presence on the European scene, but it did not rule out rather severe criticism of America's lack of political dexterity. There was concern about America's 'lack of political maturity' and 'irrational sentiments'. *Tiden* argued that the US political scene was volatile and that the 'reason, generosity and flexibility' which had so far dominated it could easily be replaced by 'hysteria, narrow-mindedness and conservatism'.

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<sup>2</sup> This and the following paragraphs lean heavily on Anders Berge, *Det kalla kriget i Tidens spegel*, Stockholm: Carlssons, 1990.

Different groups perceived the Soviet peace offensive differently. To Sweden's military establishment, Soviet talk of détente and peaceful coexistence was nothing but a tactical ruse, and it was feared that public opinion would start to demand arms reductions. *Dagens Nyheter*, the largest morning paper, shared this view and called détente an illusion. *Tiden*, on the other hand, was immediately taken with the new signals from Moscow. The Soviet Union was perceived not as an expansionist but as a status-quo power, which was an important new feature in *Tiden*'s analysis. The creation of a strong Western defense system and the implementation of a firm policy towards the Communist bloc had, the journal reasoned, created a balance of power. According to *Tiden*, the risk of war was decreasing. A year after Stalin's death, *Tiden* presumed that within a foreseeable future there would be no immediate threat of Soviet military aggression.

As *Tiden* changed its view on Soviet foreign policy, it blamed Washington for being unwilling to negotiate. It saw the Republican rhetoric of liberation as an obstacle to a policy of conciliation and rapprochement. The Western policy, it argued, should be to preserve a strong military position while taking every opportunity to negotiate partial agreements with the Soviets. Such a policy would stabilise peace and further reduce tension.

### ***Peace as the highest priority***

As the Cold War developed, most Swedish commentators adopted a pro-Western outlook. Starting in early 1948, *Dagens Nyheter* advocated Swedish membership in the projected Western military alliance. The newspaper defined the Cold War as a fight between good and evil, freedom and oppression, and argued that a firm stance in favour of the values represented by the Western powers was a moral obligation. Social Democratic newspapers defended the policy of neutrality and argued that one should prioritize the preservation of peace, rather than jump on the Cold War bandwagon: they approved of the Western powers' development of a common defense strategy and supported the strengthening of Swedish defense forces, but believed that peace and stability in the North was best preserved by Sweden remaining un-aligned.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sten Ottosson, *Den (o)moraliska neutraliteten. Tre politikernas och tre tidningars moraliska värdering av svensk utrikespolitik 1945–1952*, Stockholm, Santérus, 2000.

It might seem superfluous to ask whether contemporary actors prioritized peace or freedom, for everyone wanted both. But, judging from recent studies, the Social Democrats were mostly concerned with securing world peace. This they perceived as the most immediate problem. Others, on the other hand, were more concerned about preparing a defense against an aggressor.

### ***The invincible development of democracy***

On 31 October 1956, Prime Minister Tage Erlander made a public statement about the Polish and Hungarian revolts. According to Erlander, these rebellions showed that people's determination to gain civil rights and national freedom had not been stifled during the years of oppression. In this he saw a confirmation of the democratic doctrine that dictatorships, however strong they may look from the outside, and however effectively they may organize the surveillance and oppression of their citizens, always carry the seed of their own destruction within them.

This belief in man's natural struggle for individual freedoms and equal rights is an integrated part of a long-standing, liberal-democratic mode of thought. For commentators in a small, peripheral democracy, witnessing the upheavals that were taking place on the international arena, it might have offered some comfort. Democracy would eventually win out, and this would happen not because of foreign intervention but through an inherent domestic process of democratization.

It is, in this context, important to note that a firm belief in the eventual victory of democracy seems to imply a non-martial outlook, for it makes the intervention of foreign military forces appear unnecessary and possibly counterproductive.

It is probably impossible to assess how widespread this line of thought was. It appeared in Social Democratic newspapers before and during the Second World War, as well as in other of the Swedish Prime Minister's statements during the Cold War. I would assume that this idea primarily informed the social-democratic/liberal worldview and that, despite being both vague and distant, it played a role in the Cold War debate that should not be neglected.

## 2. Structural characteristics of the Swedish foreign policy debate

Naturally, opposition – total or partial – to these ideas explains the controversies Undén stirred up. It is, however, my belief that a more thorough understanding of the political climate of the time is essential for an appreciation of the real significance of these controversies. The following three points may contribute to an understanding of why the foreign minister met with such opposition.

### *Soviet Communism as the secret ally of the Social Democrats*

In Sweden, as in many other European countries, fear of Communism had, since the October Revolution, been a major incentive for political and social reform. When, in 1918, the Swedish Conservatives conceded to demands for complete political democracy, their resistance to the reform had, in part, been undermined by the perceived risk of radical, Communist-inspired rebellion.

In the 1920s, industrialists sensed a relation between the neglect of the workers' social conditions and the growth of communism, and concluded that the progress of Bolshevism could only be halted if ordinary workers felt they were being treated with respect and consideration. If the industrial management provided safety and prosperity, hatred and bitterness would fade away and Communism would lose its followers. A brutal and ruthless attitude, on the other hand, would make Communism flourish.

Such insights surely helped create a fairly broad acceptance of the Social Democratic social reform policy that was initiated during the 1930s. After the Second World War, Social Democrats would argue that social reform and Keynesian financial policies were the only effective means of providing workers with jobs and security and, consequently, of keeping the communists at bay. Leaders of the Swedish Communist Party were acutely aware of the connection between progressive reforms and their own political fate. In an internal debate in 1943, one of the Communist leaders remarked that the rise in the standard of living which Swedish workers had experienced during the past few years had pacified them. Only a serious economic crisis, he complained, would spur them into action.

Being the party in power, the Social Democrats were constantly accused of not fighting subversive communist activities with sufficient determination. Surely they could answer that they had always been in the forefront when it came to combating Bolshevism – true enough, and quite naturally so, for they would be the first to be harmed by Communist electoral gains. But that did not prevent others from suspecting Social Democrats of not wanting to settle accounts with the communists, once and for all. An unspoken reason for that suspicion was, I would argue, the fact that the communist threat helped legitimize the Social Democrats' construction of the welfare state. A policy of redistribution of common assets and an interventionist financial policy aiming at easing the effects of economic recessions were both corner stones in this policy, and an effective means of disarming the Communist Party. The communist threat legitimized Social Democratic policies. To those who were against high taxes, state intervention, collective insurance schemes etc., communism might thus appear as the secret ally of the Social Democrats, or rather, as an enemy they would rather not do without.

### ***The demand for consensus***

During the 1950s, anti-communism was the dominant ideological concept. It was embraced by practically everyone on the Swedish public arena. With few exceptions, participants in the public debate agreed that communism was a major threat to national independence and democratic values. As Alf W. Johansson has argued, this consensus contained a certain amount of coercion. You were expected to repeat these fundamental truths at all and any imaginable occasions. Those who seemed to lack persistence in declaring their allegiance to the anti-communist creed ran the risk of being singled out as unreliable or even labeled 'fellow travellers'.

The essence of this analysis seems to be that assertions about a person's reliability in relation to consensual values can be used as instruments of power. When a public figure is accused of this type of unreliability, his political or social position is undermined. From this point of view, Swedish foreign policy debate during the 1950s underwent an interesting change. At the beginning of the decade, anti-Communism was a consensual value used to exclude the politically unreliable. By the

decade's end, the concept of neutrality was being used in the same politically exclusionary manner. Evidently, every era has its own dominant discourse, one to which you must swear allegiance if you care about your political standing.

### ***The Russian mind***

The third structural characteristic in the debate on Soviet political intentions consisted of stereotypical images of the 'timeless Russian'. In diplomatic reports from the inter-war period, allusions to the Russian mentality are common. The Russian way of thinking is depicted as belonging to a category of its own, completely different from Western standards. The Russian is governed by emotional impulses, while the Westerner is rational. The Russian mind is imaginative and creative, but lacks contact with reality. Analyses of the Swedish debate, inspired by Edward Said and his followers, confirm that images of Russians as 'the Other' were common in Swedish diplomatic reports, as well as in the public debate during the interwar period. There are at least some instances of these attitudes being expressed in the 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

Even though it is difficult to assess the importance of these ideas concerning the 'Russian mind', it seems reasonable to assume that they help explain the constant allusions to the unpredictability and unreliability of the Soviet leadership.

### ***Conclusion***

The essence of the points mentioned above is that any Social Democrat who economized on anti-Communist statements and who, further, held Russians and Westerners to be mentally similar and equal, was bound to incur suspicion and disfavour.

## **3. Undén's perception of his role**

Besides these structural factors, some of Undén's personal ideas of how a Swedish foreign minister should act may, in my opinion, help us understand the discord between him and his numerous critics.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Westlund, *Med "svenska" ögon. Nils Lindhs, Otto Järtes och Arthur Montgomerys syn på Ryssland/Sovjetunionen 1905–1970*. Avhandlingsmanus, 2003. Andreas Hornegård, C-uppsats, Hist. Inst., Stockholms Universitet, VT 2004.



### ***Objective analysis***

In his speech during the Swedish Parliament's foreign policy debate in 1955 discussing President Eisenhower's address to Congress, Östen Undén listed a number of signs that indicated a relaxation in international relations. He mentioned that the Eastern bloc, and especially the Soviet Union, had expressed the wish for improved relations with the Western countries. The concept of peaceful co-existence had been strongly emphasized. He noted, as a sign of this inclination to cooperate, that the Soviet Union had offered to put technical information about its first nuclear plant at the UN's disposal by January of that year.

He went on to remark that observers outside the Eastern bloc had not interpreted the new signals from Moscow as signs of a permanent or profound change in Moscow's policy. During the past year, a number of Western countries bordering the Eastern bloc had concluded military alliances. The encirclement of the Eastern bloc had tightened more and more. He added that this encirclement, and especially West Germany's projected rearmament and admission to NATO, had, without doubt, caused great anxiety in both Moscow and Beijing.

Professor Bertil Ohlin, leader of the Liberal Party, remarked in his speech that the Foreign Minister seemed to be 'mildly surprised' that the Western powers did not appear to regard the new signals as expressions of a permanent and profound change. In his own mind, there was little foundation for an optimistic conclusion. Ohlin mentioned a number of instances of continued or growing Soviet dominance in Central and Eastern Europe. These led him to draw a far more pessimistic conclusion. One should not speak of the encirclement of the Communist countries while neglecting to mention that it was they who had forced the Western powers to take these measures. The Foreign Minister's presentation was, to say the least, one-sided.<sup>5</sup>

Jarl Hjalmarsson, leader of the Conservative Party, opposed the very idea of peaceful co-existence, arguing that the Soviet system lacked freedom and had an inclination to violence, which made free spiritual exchange on the individual and human level impossible. With reference

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<sup>5</sup> *Riksdagsdebatterna. Andra Kammaren, 1955* (AK 1955), Stockholm: Riksdagens ekonomibyrå, 1952–1970, nr 8, p. 68

to recent signs of Soviet concessions on the German issue, he added, 'pleasant words, coming too late, are nothing but words...'<sup>6</sup>

Undén understood these objections as directed both against the style of his presentation and the purpose of a general debate on international relations as he understood it. 'I thought, he said, that my personal views on one or other of the great powers and its activities were of little interest. I thought a presentation of how the various powers view each other and how they react to each other's policies would be more interesting'.<sup>7</sup>

Undén refuted those who demanded that a matter-of-fact presentation always be accompanied by a moral judgment or a moralizing statement about who was responsible for the present situation or who was to be blamed for current controversies. Emotional or moralizing judgments would merely obscure the real issues.

'Only those who put moralizing above the political result would talk about concessions as coming too late, he remarked. If you want to promote a development in the interest of peace, it does not make sense to tell someone that his concessions should have come earlier.'<sup>8</sup>

Undén did not explicitly reply to the open criticism of his objectivity argument, namely that one's *selection* of facts never could be void of values.<sup>9</sup> But his general reasoning, as briefly summarized above, seems to imply that the selection he himself had made was designed to contribute to a discussion on how to diminish mutual distrust and pave the way towards peaceful settlements of outstanding issues.

The day after the debate, he wrote an irritated remark in his diary. According to right-wing newspapers, his presentation to the Parliament had been dull, plain, void of emotions and even East-oriented. His comment was bitter: 'Swedish politicians are like little children, they want

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 74 (Intervention by Ohlin) It is notorious in this kind of disputes that the discussants describe their own interventions as matter of fact and the ones by their opponents as charged with values. Consequently, after having remarked that Undén's speech by its selection of facts contained hidden values, Ohlin went on by stating that his own selection (containing the Soviet policy in Austria and Balkans) contained nothing but facts, which could not be passed over in silence.

an emotional approach. Had I here and there added a few words of abuse of the Soviets, I would have received nothing but praise.<sup>10</sup>

Thus Undén declined to comment on who should be blamed for the strengthening of military alliances. Likewise, he avoided expressing an opinion on the true nature of the Soviet peace offensive. In a statement made in Parliament in 1954, he pointed out that some people regarded the peace offensive as nothing more than Soviet tactical maneuvers. Others took into account the possibility that enlightened self-interest might have prompted the Soviet Union towards a durable rapprochement between the blocs. Undén himself questioned whether it was really worthwhile to try to make such distinctions. 'This is', he said, 'a question which, to an outside observer, seems impossible to answer and which is perhaps not a practical problem to the Soviet leaders themselves.' If, however, the Soviet leaders were not prepared to make concessions, the thaw was bound to be temporary. On the other hand, the outcome of the new Soviet attitude depended partly on conditions outside of Soviet control, 'including the repercussions caused by Soviet policy in other countries and the reactions which that policy produces'.<sup>11</sup>

In later debates, Undén dismissed the 'tactics-or-honesty issue' and repeated that the important point was how the Great Powers perceived the other side's intentions and activities. He did, however, when prompted by critics, admit that he shared the Western powers' assessment of Soviet policy as not having undergone any permanent or profound change (during a speech in a 1955 session of Parliament).<sup>12</sup> He also declared that the new Soviet policy did not change his view of the overall aims of the Communist regime. It still wanted to strengthen the position of world communism. The Soviets would, however, not try to achieve these aims by means of war. Did that mean that the new regime was peaceful at heart? His analysis seems to lead to this conclusion, but, on the other hand, he repeatedly warned against letting the new situation motivate a reduction in armaments.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Östen Undén, *Anteckningar, 1952–1966* (utgivna genom Karl Molin), Stockholm, Kungl. Samf. för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 2002, 9/3, 10/3 1955.

<sup>11</sup> *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy 1954*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>12</sup> AK 1955, nr 8, p.70 f.

<sup>13</sup> *Documents on Swedish foreign policy 1953, 1954*.

### *Diplomatic advice*

In conversations with foreign diplomats and politicians, Undén generally adopted a low profile. When asked about his views on current issues in international politics, he often replied that the Swedish government had no reason to take a standpoint, as it was not directly involved. He would sometimes add that he himself was not sufficiently informed to form an opinion.<sup>14</sup> After these preliminaries he would, nonetheless, sometimes express quite definite opinions on current international issues.

An example of this is a conversation in July 1953 with the American ambassador to Stockholm, Mr. Butterworth. One of the issues they discussed was the exchange of notes between the Soviet Union and the Western powers on the German question. The ambassador reminded Undén that he had suggested, some time ago, that this exchange should not be regarded as finished. Rather, it should be seen as a point of departure for new proposals. The ambassador asked for advice. "What do you think we should do?" he asked. Undén answered: 'Draw up a specified proposal for guarantees of free elections (in all of Germany) and demand that the Soviets answer it.'<sup>15</sup>

A conversation in June 1955 offers another example. Östen Undén had received the British ambassador, and they were discussing the approaching summit meeting in Geneva. 'I expressed a hope that they (the British) would respond with interest and sympathy to the Soviet approaches which had undoubtedly been made and that they would not display too much distrust and fear. If not (met with some sympathy), the Russians might once again withdraw.' The ambassador replied that this was indeed the British position, and that they were trying to get the Americans to think along the same lines.<sup>16</sup>

A few months later, Soviet ambassador Rodionov expressed his frustration with the vicious circle of distrust that hampered the disarmament negotiations: no disarmament was possible without trust, but trust

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<sup>14</sup> PM ang. samtal med Polens chargé d'affaires, u. Östen Undén, 11/3 1954; PM ang. samtal med brittiske ambassadören, u. Östen Undén, 13/5 1954; PM ang. samtal med amerikanske ambassadören, u. Östen Undén, 7/9 1954; PM ang. samtal med brittiske ambassadören, u. Östen Undén, 1/11 1954, HP 1 S, UD:1920; PM ang samtal med brasilianske ambassadören, u. 10/8 1955, Östen Undén, vol. 183, HP1Er, UD:1920.

<sup>15</sup> PM ang. samtal med USA:s ambassadör 8/7 1953, HP1 S, UD:1920.

<sup>16</sup> PM ang. samtal med den brittiske ambassadören, u. Östen Undén, 15/6 1955, HP 1 S, UD:1920.

could be achieved only through disarmament. Undén replied that concessions in other fields would help solve the problem and referred to the recent return of the Finnish naval base of Porkkala as a case in point. More of the same, he seemed to imply, would do the trick. Rodionov complained, however, that some people in Moscow argued that concessions would only be perceived as a sign of weakness.<sup>17</sup>

In June 1956, the British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd, who was on a visit to Stockholm, had a long conversation with Undén. They discussed Soviet policies and attitudes at some length. Undén recorded this: 'I mentioned some groups' tendency to belittle both the recently proclaimed Russian disarmament and various moves to normalize relations between the Soviet Union and the non-communist countries. In my opinion this tendency was definitely inappropriate. Lloyd agreed and informed me that Eden had let (Moscow) know his gratitude for their decision to (undertake) unilateral disarmament.'<sup>18</sup>

### *Diplomatic criticism*

Undén rarely offered advice during his conversations with foreign diplomats; he resorted to outspoken criticism still more infrequently. But it did occasionally happen.

One well-known instance of this was during his meeting with Soviet ambassador Rodionov on 1 June 1954. Rodionov presented a note in which the Soviets protested against alleged Swedish participation in the construction of a naval base in the Norwegian city of Trondheim. The Soviet ambassador received a very blunt reply: the Soviet government was spreading lies and interfering in internal Swedish affairs. Sweden wanted to improve communications with a neighbouring country and that was no concern of the Soviet government. What would they say if Sweden meddled in Russian negotiations with China or Persia regarding improved road connections between the countries?<sup>19</sup>

Undén was evidently upset, but the important point, here, is that he did not air his irritation in public. On the contrary, he was anxious to minimize publicity around the whole affair.

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<sup>17</sup> Östen Undén t. Arne S. Lundberg 8/10 1955, vol. 185, HP1Er, UD:1920.

<sup>18</sup> PM ang. samtal med Selwyn Lloyd, u. Östen Undén, 9/6 1956, HP1S, UD:1920.

<sup>19</sup> Gunnar Jarring, Rikets förhållande till främmande makt.

The intervention of the Red Army in Hungary in October 1956 was, of course, met with sharp criticism from the Foreign Minister, as well as from the Prime Minister and the Social Democratic Party executive – in statements approved by Undén. Undén restated his criticism during the United Nation's November session. After that, he made no public statements on the subject until the Swedish Parliament's foreign policy debate in March 1957. On this occasion, he once again claimed that the Soviets had made a 'dogmatic mistake' when they intervened in Hungary. If left alone, the Hungarian people would have followed the same road towards democracy and neutrality as Austria had, and would in no way have jeopardized Soviet security.<sup>20</sup> Undén's general policy seems to have been to show reticence with respect to public criticism in order to promote a normalization of relations. But he expanded on his criticism in private conversations. Shortly before Christmas 1956, Ambassador Rodionov learned that there was a public opinion uproar over the way that the Soviets had treated Hungary as if it were their own territory; public opinion had demanded that a Hungarian government be installed that enjoyed the nation's trust.<sup>21</sup>

When the Hungarian Minister to Stockholm in November 1957 presented Undén with his government's white paper on the events of October 1956, Undén once again picked up the controversy. The Minister explained that the book was about the 'counter-revolutionary uprising'. Undén interrupted him and corrected his choice of words: it should be termed 'revolutionary movement'. A long discussion followed, and Undén repeated his views.<sup>22</sup>

An instance of 'private' criticism directed towards the other side can be found in a conversation with the American ambassador, who paid Undén a visit in January 1958. A current Russian proposal for a summit was, the ambassador intimated, no more than propaganda. The Russians did not honestly desire concrete results. Undén evidently reacted strongly. One should not take it for granted that the Soviet government was indifferent to whether tension eased or increased, and neither should one reject the possibility that the Soviet government had a

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<sup>20</sup> *Utrikesfrågor. Offentliga dokument m m rörande viktigare svenska utrikesfrågor*. Stockholm: Utrikesdepartementet, 1952–2004, 1957, s. 14.

<sup>21</sup> PM ang. samtal med sovjetiske ambassadören, u. Östen Undén 18/12 1956, HP 1 S.

<sup>22</sup> PM ang. samtal med ungerske ministern, u. Östen Undén 21/11 1957, HP 1 S.

strong interest in détente and that the most recent developments had alarmed it seriously. A fear that the establishment of military bases around the Soviet Union could cause incidents was not an instance of exaggerated apprehension.<sup>23</sup>

Undén, of course, had made public statements in which he had stressed, in general terms, that détente required that both parties be willing to listen to each other. But he had never, as far as I know, openly criticized anyone for not showing such willingness. This seems to be in accordance with a general policy of confining criticism to private discussions.

### ***Conclusion***

Östen Undén's policy of differentiating between public and private appearances was very far removed from the policy that was to follow in the late 1960s and 1970s, when Olof Palme dominated the scene. Undén never tried to make politics by mobilizing public opinion. His public speeches were reminiscent of university lectures, and he was of the opinion that the UN was the only natural arena for presenting more far-reaching proposals. He certainly held strong views on current issues, but in most cases he preferred to express them in private conversations.

In my view, it is possible, from his speeches and activities, to discern his conception, which was quite clear, of the proper role for a Swedish Foreign Minister who wanted to preserve his country's security and help prevent a war that might mean the end of human civilization. His problem was that this role, as he perceived it, was not generally accepted – if indeed understood – by his critics. He and his critics were moving in two different political discourses.

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<sup>23</sup> PM ang. samtal med USA: s ambassadör, u. Östen Undén 28/1 1958, HP 1.

## Chapter 8.

### Records of the Russian State Archives of Contemporary History on the Post-war History of Soviet-Swedish Relations

*Mikhail Prozumenshchikov*

The history of the Soviet state is inseparable from that of the Communist Party, emerging as the main player on the country's political scene in the 20th century. This phenomenon helps to explain the fact that the Party's Central Committee documents stored in RGANI, (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv noveishei istorii*), Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, reflect first and foremost the history of the Soviet society, the development of international relations, and only secondly the Communist party's history as such. Chronologically records from the RGANI cover a relatively short period by historical standards (1953 – August 1991). However, the last decades of the Soviet system constituted a crucial stage in the history of the Russian state, full of diverse and momentous events both domestically and internationally.

The party superstructure towering over the whole institutional edifice of the Soviet society served as its main defining and regulating force, which, apart from maintaining the ideological, moral and political 'purity' of the populace, also controlled all the state's functions in the economic, diplomatic, social, cultural, scientific and other spheres. The party bureaucratic apparatus, completely intertwined with state agencies, functioned in accordance with a rather unwieldy, but well-tested scheme, often remaining unchangeable for decades, which had both positive and negative sides. Guaranteeing an orderly and coherent decision-making process, this system however stifled initiative, lacked flexibility and ability to process new ideas in a creative manner and implement them practically.

The party hierarchical pyramid was topped by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU CC), having a final word on each and every issue. This level also represented



the culminating point of fusion between party and government mechanisms, as the leaders of the Party – sometimes *de jure* and always *de facto* – acted as heads of state as well. Therefore, decisions made at the Party's Central Committee (CC) could not be repealed or subject to criticism and had to be executed in a compulsory and unquestioning manner by all party and government structures.

During the Soviet period all information flows on the developments in the country and the world converged at Moscow's *Staraya ploshchad* (Old Square), where the CPSU CC headquarters was situated. And, given the tendency of the system to classify totally and indefinitely nearly every document submitted to the CPSU CC or produced by it, this information was, to an extent, unbiased: those who compiled these papers did not need to worry that their direct descendants – to say nothing of their contemporaries – could have a chance to read the papers and appraise their content. Party and state officials were absolutely sure that party archives would never, even after Communism's worldwide triumph, be opened for the public, and published memoirs by party leaders were at the time unthinkable.

Meanwhile, diverse information received by the Central Committee from various sources, often duplicating and supplementing each other, gave the Soviet leadership a rather realistic picture of the existing problems, allowing them to make relevant decisions on this basis. The system, however, had a specific feature – a lack of clear-cut criteria as regards the scale of issues to be submitted for resolution at the highest level. Thus on the same day the party leadership could discuss problems of national defence and the progress of a sowing campaign in one of Russia's regions; an international treaty of paramount importance and sufficient paper supply to print calendars; nuclear power industry development and the program of the official concert to celebrate an anniversary of the October revolution.

The most important decisions were normally taken at the sessions of the Politburo of the Central Committee (in the Khrushchev period this body was called the Presidium) and Secretariat – the two structures, which, in accordance with the party's Charter, directed its activities between the Central Committee Plenums. They also elaborated the basic principles of Soviet policies later reflected in statements and actions of the leaders of the country, as well as in agreements with other

governments, implemented by Ministries and other agencies, broadcast by Soviet media.

As far as preparatory work, such as sifting and analyzing information submitted to the Central Committee, elaborating documents and memoranda for decision-making on various issues, compiling and revising draft resolutions, executive orders, agreements, and controlling their implementation – was concerned, these functions, together with many others, were performed by the Central Committee apparatus: its departments supervising all spheres of state and party activities.

In the 1950s the development of international relations became one of the most important activities of the Central Committee. After World War II Soviet foreign policy gathered a new momentum, driven by Moscow's desire to play an active part at the international scene. In that period the USSR, naturally focused on its relations with East European countries and Communist China, but contacts with other states were expanding steadily as well. Obviously, both in the Khrushchev period and later on Sweden was never the main focal point of Soviet foreign policy interests. This, however, does not mean it did not receive proper attention in Moscow. Numerous documents on various aspects of Soviet-Swedish relations in RGANI collections clearly testify to the contrary.

As we mentioned before, the most important documents of the Central Committee are to be found in the collection of the Presidium of the Central Committee. Principles of political relations with Sweden, as well as economic cooperation issues were discussed at the sessions of the Presidium. In the 1950s, for instance, the Presidium elaborated and approved draft intergovernmental treaties, took decisions on loans and trade agreements between the USSR and Sweden, and dealt with issues regarding the coordination between the rescue services of two countries as well as bilateral cooperation in exploring the High North to mention a few examples. The collection of documents of the Presidium also includes papers on regular visit exchanges of parliamentary and government delegations, as well as on meetings between Soviet and Swedish leaders. In the 1950s such summits were represented by Prime Minister Erlander's visit to the USSR in 1956, Nikita Khrushchev's planned trip to Sweden in 1959 and his actual trip in 1964. The 1959 voyage was cancelled at the last moment because of the Soviet leader's visit to the

USA, but the archive contains a substantial amount of working materials prepared for the Soviet-Swedish summit.

The Presidium also discussed and resolved issues on a smaller scale, but these records are of a high historical value as well. Moscow, for instance, highly appreciated the role of the Swedish Red Cross in the saga of the Soviet tanker 'Tuapse', as well as Sweden's help in establishing contacts between the USSR and West European, especially German, Social Democrats. For its part, the Soviet Union tried to develop friendly relations with its Northern neighbour; the Kremlin sanctioned the construction of an oil pipeline from the USSR to Sweden and assistance to Swedish nuclear research. During his visit to Stockholm in 1964 Khrushchev promised to continue the practice of ordering and importing Swedish pipes, though, as he mentioned proudly, 'now we can already make pipes like these ourselves.' This Soviet leader's promise was later formalized by a relevant Presidium decision.

Top party leadership also assessed 'secret' issues like arms shipments from Czechoslovakia to Sweden or the situation around the Swedish ship 'Bengt Sture'. A separate body of documents concerns Raoul Wallenberg's tragic fate. This question, repeatedly raised by the Swedes during various meetings, remained among the most painful bilateral issues for the whole Khrushchev period. Thus, in the early 1960s, during a conversation with Swedish Ambassador Rolf Sohlman, who once again enquired about Wallenberg, Nikita Khrushchev asked in an irritated voice not to be bothered any more with the case.

The Central Committee Secretariat dealt with issues of a rather different kind. Most of the documents in its collection concern exchanges of delegations, bilateral contacts between 'fraternal' cities, USSR-Sweden and Sweden-USSR Friendship Societies. The Secretariat also made decisions to invite well-known Swedish politicians, public figures and businessmen to the USSR for vacations or medical treatment. Most of them were members of the Communist Party and other left-wing organizations, but sometimes similar invitations were sent to representatives of other political forces, who attracted Moscow's interest for this or that reason. In Khrushchev's time the Secretariat also supervised the Soviet Foreign Ministry: changes in the structure of its central apparatus or reorganizations of Soviet embassies and missions abroad were coordinated and decided upon by the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

The intertwining of the Soviet state and party system was most vivid in its international activities. The world regarded Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev and their successors primarily as heads of state and only secondly as leaders of the ruling party. Characteristically, during visits abroad (if the country in question did not belong to the 'socialist camp') the Communist Party leaders also preferred to present themselves as leaders of a great power, and refrained from emphasizing their party affiliation. Still, all the foreign policy activities performed by state organs are subject to strict party control, which certainly did not ease with the passage of time.

In contrast to what was the case during the late Stalin years, a typical trait in the mid-1950s of the procedure for elaborating the foreign policy lines of the country was the collective decision-making. Stalin had personally taken decisions on most foreign policy issues, regarding this as his legitimate privilege. Thus, in the period 1953–1957 international problems were lively debated and discussed within the top Soviet leadership. Therefore, the Central Committee documents from this period are of special interest. They partly explain the origins and character of certain actions undertaken by the Soviet leadership, and in some cases even allow one to trace the whole chain of political decision-making at the highest level.

At the same time the elaboration of the country's foreign policy in that period was seriously influenced by the power struggle between Stalin's heirs. The struggle was mostly covert, but sometimes spilling into the open. The demise of Lavrentii Beria in 1953, the removal of Georgii Malenkov from the political elite in 1955 and 1957, and the defeat of the so-called 'anti-party group' in 1957 represented only the top of the iceberg; they were outcomes of a fierce battle for power won by Nikita Khrushchev. When international problems were discussed, Khrushchev was often challenged by Vyacheslav Molotov, both in the latter's official capacity as Foreign Minister, and as a politician possessing a formidable influence and authority in the party leadership. The differing opinions of the two leaders can in fact be traced in the Central Committee materials: they were reflected in many forms, from different interpretations of the same events to the elaboration of 'compromise' documents accommodating both points of view. Only in 1957, when Molotov and his supporters in the Presidium were removed from their

posts foreign policy (at least on the surface) ceased to be a politically contentious theme within the Soviet leadership. Now, the making of the foreign policy, was increasingly dominated by Khrushchev's personal attitudes - often impulsive and unpredictable.

The character of documents in RGANI collections also reflects the intertwining of the state and party apparatus and the desire of the top party leadership to exercise total control over the country's foreign policy activities. While Molotov headed the Foreign Ministry, relatively few materials on international issues were submitted to the Central Committee. Obviously, most of these papers were either addressed directly to the Presidium or never left the Foreign Ministry at all. When Molotov was replaced by Andrei Gromyko, the situation changed radically: the number of documents regarding foreign policy matters in the Central Committee apparatus increased sharply.

This voluminous and diverse body of archival documents on international relations in general and Soviet policies towards Sweden in particular are stored primarily within the collection of the International Department of the Central Committee. This collection contains reports, memoranda, briefing papers and letters compiled by the Central Committee itself, the Foreign Ministry and Soviet Embassy in Sweden, the KGB, other Soviet ministries and agencies, and non-state organizations. A special – and quite large – category of documents is represented by records of conversations between Soviet government and party officials or diplomats and Swedish representatives, as well as materials received by Soviet organizations from abroad.

Apart from the character and volume of documents, increased attention of the CPSU CC to international problems in the 1950s substantially influenced the structure of its own departments overseeing party and state foreign policy activities. In the post-war period this structure was becoming increasingly sophisticated and underwent a number of transformations.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s the Central Committee's apparatus included the Foreign Policy Commission of the Politburo dealing with international affairs and contacts with foreign communist parties and other workers' organizations; in 1952 it was renamed and called the Commission on the Relations with Foreign Communist Parties. After Stalin's death the new leadership established the CPSU CC Department

on the Relations with Foreign Communist Parties to supervise party and state international activity as a whole. New sections, divisions etc. were constantly created within the Commissions and the Department; then they were repeatedly merged and divided once again depending on the current political situation.

The shaping of the structures of the Commissions and Departments was closely related to the international situation and the changes in Soviet foreign policy. This connection was vividly reflected in the strange country-wise principle determining the creation of numerous sections within the CC's international bodies. For instance, even after communists' defeat in the Greek civil war the country for a certain period remained in the same section with the so-called 'people's democracies'. On the other hand, Yugoslavia and The German Democratic Republic stayed in the same sections with capitalist states until mid-1950s, when relations with Belgrade were restored and illusions concerning Germany's peaceful reunification evaporated.

Only in the early 1957 were the Central Committee's international structures finally divided according to the political systems of the countries they dealt with. During a new reorganization the Department on the Relations with Foreign Communist Parties was split into two independent bodies – The CPSU CC Department on the Relations with Communist and Workers' Parties of the Socialist Countries, and the International Department (covering, accordingly, the rest of the world). In the first years after Stalin's death heads of the Central Committee's foreign policy body changed practically every year (this post was occupied in succession by Grigoriyan, Suslov and Stepanov), but then things changed: Boris N. Ponomarev, appointed as head of the International Department in 1955, remained in this position for more than 30 years. Razdorozhniy, head of the Department's Scandinavian Section, was a political veteran as well. In mid-1950s this position was occupied by Kabin, then Razdorozhniy replaced him in summer 1957, and remained the party's chief Scandinavian expert until 1987.

As far as the Section itself is concerned, it avoided significant reorganizations during the whole Khrushchev period. In 1953 it was called the Section of Germany, Holland and Scandinavian Countries; since 1957 – the Section of Finland and Scandinavian Countries, and in 1961 finally received the name it retained until 1988 – the Nordic Section.

It's worth noting that, in spite of the fact that the names of departments in charge of international matters in various periods always included formulas on relations with foreign communist parties and workers' organizations, documents they dealt with were never confined only to this type of contacts. The CPSU CC received all kinds of information concerning a wide range of international problems of interest to the USSR and the Communist Party. As far as relations with Soviet bloc countries ruled by Communist and workers' parties were concerned, inter-party relations were often equivalent to the inter-government ones, but in the materials on other states documents reflecting the CPSU's contacts with local communists were not always prevalent.

This is true, for instance, for the International Department's documents related to Sweden. It's difficult to find a topic that is not reflected in these archival materials. They include memoranda on the political situation in Sweden, results of various elections, Swedish attitudes towards the EEC and the public's reaction to the events in Hungary in 1956, briefing papers on social security for senior citizens in Stockholm and the intensification of US propaganda in Sweden. A lot of documents concern bilateral exchange of delegations. Apart from academics, artists, public figures, these exchanges included visits by clergymen and the military, mostly naval vessels. In the 1950s contacts between Soviet and Swedish trade unions, women's and students' organizations developed dynamically as well.

The bulk of the documents, of course, cover relations between the CPSU and the Swedish Communist Party. These materials reflect both the specific problems of the Swedish party (preparation and organization of party conferences, Swedish communists' reactions to the decisions of the XX and XXI CPSU Congresses etc.) and the issues of the international Communist movement. Moscow thoroughly studied information on Scandinavian Communist parties' conferences, on Swedish communists' positions at the Conferences of Communist and Workers' Parties of 1957 and 1960. In the early 1960s growing pro-Chinese sympathies among Swedish communists and the increase of their leaders' contacts with the Chinese Communist Party, which at the moment was criticizing the USSR and the CPSU, worried the Soviets. A number of documents cover CPSU support to their Swedish comrades, which included both direct financing and indirect aid – assistance in buying

necessary equipment, publishing party materials and textbooks, invitations for party functionaries to study in Moscow etc. Many RGANI documents are related to well-known Swedish Communists – Hilding Hagberg, Frithiof Lager, C. H. Hermansson and others. On some of them the CPSU CC kept personal files or so-called ‘dossiers.’

As we have mentioned before, in that period the CPSU did not limit its international relations to contacts with communists. The policy of expanded political dialogue with ‘democratically oriented’ parties in capitalist countries, proclaimed by Khrushchev at the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress, provided Soviet representatives abroad with an official permission to maintain contacts with members of these parties and associations, whose positions were sometimes far from pro-Soviet. As a result, CPSU CC documents now included an increasing number of briefing papers and *politpis'ma* (‘political letters’, or memoranda) on the situation in other Swedish parties, and records of conversations with leaders of the Swedish Social Democrats, Centre and Agrarian Parties.

In the 1950s Stockholm was a venue for various public forums, which the USSR tried to use for its own political purposes. Materials from the CPSU CC apparatus contain a lot of documents on the Stockholm Conference for relaxation of international tensions, the Meeting of peace advocates from the Baltic Sea countries, sessions of the World Democratic Youth Federation and the World Peace Council. And, of course, Stockholm attracted special attention in the late 1950s, when, in spite of all Moscow’s efforts, the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to the ‘disfavoured’ Russian poet and writer Boris L. Pasternak for his novel ‘Doctor Zhivago’. Various aspects of this affair are reflected in a considerable number of documents from RGANI collections.

In the Khrushchev period Moscow was most anxious to overcome the political isolation to which it had been subjected during the last years of Stalin’s life. Contacts between Eastern and Western public, cultural, scientific, religious and sports organizations expanded considerably, more and more Soviet citizens (in comparison with Stalin’s times, of course) now got an opportunity to travel abroad. On the other hand, as international affairs were in the centre of the two systems’ ideological confrontation, the party, according to Soviet ideologists, needed to exercise an especially strict control over the observation of ‘Marxist-Leninist foreign policy principles.’



Characteristically, the number of the Central Committee's departments overseeing foreign policy activities grew in parallel with that of international issues submitted to its Presidium and Secretariat. Apart from the International Department, throughout the period CPSU CC apparatus included other structures related to international affairs: the Department on Diplomatic and Foreign Trade Personnel, the Department on the Personnel Working Abroad and Foreign Travel, and the Department of Economic Cooperation with Socialist Countries. A separate group of records is represented by documents related to international conferences and negotiations with communist and workers' parties, the activities of the COMECON and the Warsaw Pact Organization.

As contacts with foreign countries expanded, international matters started to play an increasing part in the work of other CPSU CC bodies: the Departments of Propaganda, Science, Culture etc. The archive's collections contain materials on visits to Sweden by the first cosmonaut Yuri A. Gagarin, musician David Oistrakh, a Soviet circus, ballet dancers and sports teams. Contacts of the Soviet and Swedish film industries were also expanding, not without occasional difficulties, however: from time to time Moscow protested against 'anti-Soviet' films produced in Sweden (like 'The Bread of Love' presented at the Cannes Film Festival).

Various reforms undertaken by Khrushchev in the late 1950s – early 1960s, among other things, affected the CPSU CC apparatus. In 1958–1961 its structure included a special Commission on the Issues of Ideology, Culture, and International Party Relations, overseeing visits by Soviet representatives abroad and by foreign delegations to the USSR. In 1958 the CPSU CC Information Department was created as well – with a function to process and analyze various data on international problems. A year after, however, it was disbanded; attempts to recreate the Department in the late 1960s also failed. In 1962 an enormous Ideological Department was established, absorbing a number of the Central Committee's structures. From the archival point of view, however, after this merger many documents on Soviet-Swedish scientific, cultural and sports contacts ended up in 'wrong' CPSU CC structures. Only after Khrushchev's resignation the Ideological Department was dismantled and most of the former Central Committee structures it had replaced were reconstituted.

To sum up this overview of how the archival collections of the Central Committee play a key role in the research of the Khrushchev period one might conclude that a more active Soviet foreign policy in the 1950s – 1960s, the increased international influence of the ‘socialist camp,’ complex political processes taking place in the world in those years – all this generated an enormous number of documents on international problems, stored in the former CPSU CC Archive. Many of them, unfortunately, are still classified. However, even those documents that became available to scholars in recent years shed light on many ‘blank spots’ of post-war history. Obviously, the history of Soviet-Swedish relations also contains numerous ‘chapters’ requiring further research based on new archival evidence.



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