
Headed towards the West:

Swedish Neutrality and the

German Question, 1949–1972

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Abstract

This article is based on Swedish and West and East German archive material, and provides corroboration for the idea that Sweden was not truly neutral during the Cold War. Unlike Finland, which treated both German states with scrupulous equality below the threshold of diplomatic recognition, the Swedish government sent a diplomatic representative to Bonn within a few months of the constitution of the Federal Republic while refusing recognition to the GDR until the end of 1972. The article analyses the reasons behind Sweden's decision largely to adopt the Western attitude to the 'German question'.

Introduction

Throughout the Cold War Sweden's official policy was one of 'free alliance in peacetime with the goal of neutrality in war'.¹ Unofficially, however, or so the American historian Paul M. Cole strove to demonstrate in his 1990 research paper based on US sources, Sweden in the late 1940s and early 1950s maintained a 'secret military alliance' with the West and received large arms consignments from the United States.² Cole's provocative argument, published just after the end of the East–West conflict, launched an impassioned debate among historians that has still not finally been concluded.³ Wilhelm Agrell has described Sweden's Cold War policy of neutrality, so energetically stressed by the Prime Minister Tage Erlander (1946–1969) and his Foreign Minister, Östen Undén (1945–1962), as 'a big lie' and

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1 Cf. Nils Andrén and Yngve Möller, *Från Undén till Palme. Svensk utrikespolitik efter andra världskriget* (Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1990), 63–76.

2 Paul M. Cole, 'Neutralité du Jour: The Conduct of Swedish Security Policy since 1945', Ph.D. thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1990.

3 For a summary see Ann-Sophie Dahl, 'The Myth of Swedish Neutrality', in Cyril Buffet and Beatrice Heuser, eds., *Haunted by History. Myths in International Relations* (London: Berghahn, 1998), 28–40; Mikael af Malmberg, 'Sweden – NATO's Neutral Ally? A Post-Revisionist Account', in Gustav Schmidt, ed., *A History of NATO – The First Fifty Years*, vol. 3 (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 295–314.

the Swedish government's security policy as a 'double game'.⁴ Other researchers, such as Bengt Nilsson, sallied forth in defence of the 'third way' that Undén strove to follow between strict neutrality and open alliance with the West. Nilsson rejected the accusation that Sweden had a 'secret military alliance' with the United States: he thought British and US arms consignments to Sweden were essential in order to guarantee a successful neutrality policy that would promote peace.⁵ The controversy over Sweden's neutrality policy just after the Second World War flared up again recently when Magnus Petersson, of the Defence Academy in Stockholm, submitted his thesis on Swedish–Norwegian security contacts between 1949 and 1969.⁶ Based on hitherto inaccessible source material, Petersson shows that Sweden's military co-operation with Norway bound it much more closely to the Western Alliance than previously thought.⁷

Starting from Sweden's recognition of the Federal Republic of Germany, which unambiguously showed its preference for the Western side, this article will attempt to show that Sweden's neutrality was just as dubious with regard to the 'German

4 Wilhelm Agrell, *Den stora lögnen. Ett säkerhetspolitiskt dubbelspel i alltför många akter* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1991). In summer 1992 the Swedish government set up an independent commission to investigate the true extent of Sweden's military collaboration with the Western Alliance. The commission reported in early 1994 with a nuanced assessment of Sweden's neutrality policy. It confirmed that Sweden had received substantial injections of Western military technology, and that there had been a lively exchange of information between both the secret services and the military leaderships of Sweden and the Western powers; Sweden had also been prepared to accept military assistance from NATO if attacked. This did not mean, however, that there had been any binding agreements for joint operations or any pledge by Sweden to fight alongside NATO in the event of war. The commission was of the opinion that the Swedes had not overstepped the bounds of neutrality, and further that their policy of neutrality had not debarred them from investigating, in peacetime, the possibility of common defence with other states, or even a military alliance, in case of an attack by an unfriendly power. See *Om kriget kommit t... Förberedelser för mottagande av militärt bistånd 1949–1969. Betänkande av Neutralitetspolitikkommisionen*, Statens Offentliga Utredningar (SOU 1994:11) (Stockholm: Fritze, 1994), 301–8. The commission's report, submitted by Rolf Ekéus in 2002, concludes that the same applied to Sweden's security policy between 1969 and 1989: *Fred och säkerhet: Svensk säkerhetspolitik 1969–1989. Betänkande av den säkerhetspolitiska utredningen*, Statens Offentliga Utredningar (SOU 2002:108) (Stockholm: Fritze, 2003), 754–5.

5 Bengt Nilsson, 'Undéns tredje väg: Sverige i det kalla kriget 1950–1952', *Scandia*, 60 (1994), 67–97.

6 Mikael Holmström, security policy editor for the *Svenska Dagbladet*, thought that Petersson's dissertation supplied yet more proof of Sweden's 'double game': see his article 'Svenskt dubbelspel under kalla kriget', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 Nov. 2003. This 'defamation' of Sweden's foreign policy has been counter-attacked more than once by Sverker Åström, a former senior official in the Foreign Ministry who contributed substantially to shaping Sweden's neutrality policy after the Second World War. See his 'Hån av svensk neutralitetspolitik i SvD', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24 Nov. 2003. Holmström, however, has stuck to his interpretation of Swedish neutrality, which he interprets as a 'semi-alliance' with NATO: Mikael Holmström, 'Normal rapportering är inte en kampanj', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24 Nov. 2003.

7 Petersson also points out that no binding agreement had been made between Sweden and NATO to cover the eventuality of war. See Magnus Petersson, *Brödrafolkens väl. Svensk-norska säkerhetsrelationer 1949–1969* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2003). This has been confirmed by the American historian Charles Silva in his studies of Swedish–US relations from 1948 to 1952, and by the Finnish historian Juhana Aunesluoma looking at relations between Britain and Sweden from 1945 to 1954. See Charles Silva, *Keep Them Strong, Keep Them Friendly. Swedish–American Relations and the Pax Americana 1948–1952* (Stockholm: Akademitryck, 1999); Juhana Aunesluoma, *Britain, Sweden and the Cold War 1945–1954: Understanding Neutrality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

question'.⁸ I shall consider Sweden's attitude to the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) and Östen Undén's proposed solution to the German problem, both subjects that have received a good deal of scholarly attention.⁹ I shall focus on the period from the mid-1950s to the wave of international recognition of the GDR in 1972–3, exploring how Sweden reacted to the formulation of the 'Hallstein Doctrine' and why the Swedish government decided to follow the Western defence community's line so closely on the question of recognition.

Coming down on the Western side: Sweden recognises the FRG

The founding of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on 23 May 1949 and of the German Democratic Republic on 7 October the same year produced immediate competition between the two states as regards foreign policy. The GDR premier, Otto Grotewohl, got in first by emphasising in his first official pronouncement that his country wished to live in peace and friendship with all other states.¹⁰ The Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, reacted with a statement of principle in the Bundestag on 21 October 1949: the GDR had no claim to autonomy and the FRG considered itself as the sole representative of the whole German people until such time as the country recovered its unity.¹¹ Although the FRG was still more or less impotent in international affairs, its claim to sole representation (the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch*) was supported by the Western powers, spearheaded by the United States, which helped to implement an international policy of isolating the GDR not only in NATO but also among the neutral European states.¹² Britain also threw its weight behind the

8 The article is based on the thesis I defended in 2004 at the Ernst Moritz Arndt University in Greifswald, published as *Die beiden deutschen Staaten und das neutrale Schweden. Eine Dreiecksbeziehung im Schatten der offenen Deutschlandfrage 1949–1972* (Münster: Lit, 2005).

9 E.g. Michael F. Scholz, 'Östen Undén und die DDR. Schwedische Deutschlandpolitik in den fünfziger Jahren', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 41, 4 (1993), 391–417. Other studies dealing with particular aspects of Sweden's attitude to the German question are Rainer Plappert, *Zwischen Zwangsclearing und Entschädigung. Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Schweden im Schatten der Kriegsfolgefragen 1949–1956* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 17–58; Klaus Misgeld, *Sozialdemokratie und Außenpolitik in Schweden. Sozialistische Internationale, Europapolitik und die Deutschlandfrage 1945–1955* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1984); Ann-Marie Ekengren, *Av hänsyn till folkrätten. Svensk erkännandepolitik 1945–1995* (Stockholm: Nerenius and Santérus, 1999); Andreas Linderoth, 'Schweden und der Bau der Berliner Mauer', in Heiner Timmermann, ed., *1961 – Mauerbau und Außenpolitik* (Münster: Lit, 2002), 245–67; idem, 'Schweden und der Juniaufstand 1953', in Heiner Timmermann, ed., *Junii 1953 in Deutschland. Der Aufstand im Fadenkreuz von Kaltem Krieg, Katastrophe und Katharsis* (Münster: Lit, 2003), 164–87. Linderoth's dissertation, 'Kampen för erkännande. DDR:s utrikespolitik gentemot Sverige 1949–1972', Ph.D. thesis, University of Lund, 2002, explores the GDR's policy towards Sweden; Swedish attitudes to the GDR are dealt with only tangentially.

10 Statement by Premier Otto Grotewohl, 12 Oct. 1949, in *Dokumente zur Außenpolitik der DDR*, vol. I (East Berlin: Staatsverlag, 1954), 30.

11 Statement by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in the Bundestag, 21 Oct. 1949, in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, vol. II: 2, 1949 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), 214.

12 Anjana Buckow, *Zwischen Propaganda und Realpolitik. Die USA und der sowjetisch besetzte Teil Deutschlands 1945–1955* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003), 517–26.

non-recognition policy, particularly in the Commonwealth and among the European neutrals.¹³

For neutral states, anxious to maintain a balance in the East–West conflict, the foundation of two Germanys presented a thorny problem. Finland strove to avoid taking an unambiguous stance on the recognition question by refusing to recognise either German state diplomatically, and maintaining equal relations with both without crossing the recognition threshold.¹⁴ While Switzerland tried to keep equidistant from both Germanys, at least until 1951,¹⁵ Sweden was quick to decide in favour of the Western claimant: the Swedish consul general in West Berlin, Brynolf Eng, visiting the West German Chancery just before Christmas 1949, advised a prompt exchange of diplomatic representation between Stockholm and Bonn before the GDR could get any similar request in to the Swedish government.¹⁶

Sweden wanted to clinch the matter as quickly as possible so as to forestall a potential initiative from the GDR in the direction of recognition. By the beginning of 1950 Sweden already had a delegation in the capital of the newly founded West German state, headed by Undén's appointee, the career diplomat Ragnar Kumlin.¹⁷ He was in fact accredited to the Allied high commission, which still represented the FRG in matters of foreign policy. This enabled the Swedish government to point out that its representative in Bonn was accredited to the Allies and not to the West German government – hopefully a way to avoid assuming an unambiguous position on the German question and forestall potential demands for recognition from the eastern state.¹⁸

The rapid consolidation of the FRG further bolstered economic and political relations between it and Sweden: by 1952 the FRG was Sweden's biggest source of imports, and as a buyer of Swedish exports it grew steadily in importance, ranking second only to the United Kingdom.¹⁹ As economic contacts increased, diplomatic relations continually improved as well: as soon as the revision of the Statute of Occupation in spring 1951 gave the FRG the right to set up its own foreign ministry and maintain diplomatic relations, the first postwar German representation in Sweden was established (on 5 March) in the form of a consulate general. The Swedish

13 Bert Becker, *Die DDR und Großbritannien 1945/49 bis 1973. Politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Kontakte im Zeichen der Nichtanerkennungspolitik* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1991), 76.

14 Dörte Putensen, *Im Konfliktfeld zwischen Ost und West. Finnland, der Kalte Krieg und die deutsche Frage (1947–1973)* (Berlin: Spitz Verlag, 2000).

15 Hanns Jürgen Küsters, 'Die Schweiz und die Deutsche Frage (1945–1961)', in Antoine Fleury, Horst Möller and Hans-Peter Schwarz, eds., *Die Schweiz und Deutschland 1945–1961* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004), 99–118.

16 Conversation between Brynolf Eng and Herwarth von Bittenfeld, 19 Dec. 1949, in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949/50)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997), Doc. 19, 46–7.

17 See Klaus-Richard Böhme, 'Ragnar Kumlin', in Gunnar Artéus and Leif Leifland, eds., *Svenska diplomatprofiler under 1900-talet* (Stockholm: Probus, 2001), 230–49, esp. 240 ff.

18 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 396–7; Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 32.

19 Rainer Plappert, 'Bevorzugte Partner. Die deutsch-schwedischen Außenhandelsbeziehungen nach 1945', in Robert Bohn, Jürgen Elvert and Karl Christian Lammers, eds., *Deutsch-skandinavische Beziehungen nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 113–29 (115).

representative in Bonn reciprocated by transferring his accreditation from the Allied high commission to the federal government.²⁰

By contrast, Sweden's relations with the East German Socialist Unity Party (SED) regime remained distant. Swedish interests in the GDR continued to be handled by the consulate general in West Berlin, whose contacts with the East German authorities were limited to practical matters such as trade, travel and the issue of visas.²¹ As was only to be expected, the Soviet reaction to Sweden's plain choice of sides – by commencing diplomatic relations with Bonn – was extremely critical. Moscow's ambassador in Stockholm, Konstantin Rodionov, signified to Undén that Sweden would be expected to live up to its policy of neutrality by sending a representative to East Berlin as well. Undén rejected this, however, on the grounds that the newly founded East German state was in a very peculiar position, since its government had not been freely elected and was entirely dependent on the Soviet Union.²² Inside the Swedish Foreign Ministry, however, it was generally assumed that in the long run it would scarcely be possible to avoid at least a *de facto* recognition of the GDR.²³ Undén, the Foreign Minister, considered that the Easterners would exploit the fact that Sweden's most important link with the rest of Europe passed through East German territory to force it into an official relationship with the GDR.²⁴ In this he was perfectly correct, as events were to show.²⁵

Swedish neutrality as a model for Germany?

In the 1950s Undén was the chief architect of Sweden's position on the German question.²⁶ He repeatedly called attention to the danger of a continuing division of Germany. The collapse of the Reich had created a political vacuum in central Europe which, he thought, represented a potential danger to world peace in view of the worsening East–West conflict. This meant that Sweden, like other countries, had a strong interest in a peace treaty that would bring a quick end to the division of Germany.²⁷ To reduce tension among the Great Powers Undén envisaged a cordon of neutral states running from Scandinavia via Germany, Switzerland and Austria to Yugoslavia.²⁸ He was convinced that the USSR's preoccupation with security would

20 Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 33.

21 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 399; Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 32–3.

22 Note by Östen Undén on a conversation with the Soviet ambassador, Konstantin Rodionov, 28 March 1951, Riksarkivet Stockholm, Utrikesdepartementets Arkiv HP (48 A), vol. 1779.

23 Diary entry by Östen Undén, 17 March 1950, in Östen Undén, *Anteckningar 1918–1952*, ed. Karl Molin (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2002), 308.

24 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 399.

25 However, East Berlin's strategy of using the Trelleborg–Sassnitz link to pressure Sweden into setting up consular relations proved unsuccessful, mainly because the opening of the so-called '[Bird] Migration Route', and the creation of new ferry links between Schleswig–Holstein and Scandinavia in the 1960s, increasingly shifted Swedish personal travel routes towards the FRG. See Linderoth, *Kampen*, 98–109, 179–83; Muschik, *Dreiecksbeziehung*, 126–34.

26 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 391–417.

27 Riksdagens Protokoll, andra kammaren 1950, 22 March 1950, No. 11, 10–11.

28 Klaus-Richard Böhme, 'Die beiden deutschen Staaten in der schwedischen Sicherheitskonzeption 1945–1955', in Bohn et al., *Deutsch-skandinavische Beziehungen nach 1945*, 98–105.

induce it to prefer a neutralised, democratic (in the Western sense) united Germany to a Communist East Germany.²⁹

In March 1952 this attitude put Undén among those who – like many German Social Democrats – pleaded for a careful examination of the ‘Stalin Note’, in which the Soviet state and Party leader offered the Western powers a peace treaty involving a reunited, neutral but shrunken Germany with its frontier on the Oder-Neisse line. On many points Stalin’s offer echoed Undén’s vision for Germany,³⁰ and the latter repeatedly called on the West to soothe the Soviets’ preoccupation with security by abandoning attempts to integrate the FRG into the Western alliance.³¹ Only thus, he thought, could the division of Germany be overcome.³²

Undén’s position on the German question was firmly rejected by all those who thought that it was in their interests to integrate the FRG into the Western alliance as quickly as possible. Washington, in particular, was very worried about Swedish ‘neutralism’ and had formed a very negative impression of Undén as Foreign Minister.³³ Bonn was also deeply displeased with Undén’s support for a ‘neutralising’

29 Undén expressed this opinion in conversation with a West German diplomat, Carl von Holten, in December 1950. Note by Holten, 24 Jan. 1951, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA/AA), B 11, vol. 447.

30 Scholz, ‘Östen Undén’, 406–7.

31 Undén’s vision of Germany was a subject of lively discussion in the SPD. Under the leadership of Kurt Schumacher a majority in the SPD had rejected the idea of German neutrality, but after publication of the Stalin Note the party cautiously changed tack. In early April 1952 Willy Brandt had a conversation with Arne Lundberg, state secretary in the Swedish Foreign Ministry, in which Brandt said that the SPD would be in favour of an unaligned FRG, if that was a valid path to reunification (memo by Lundberg of the UD, 31 March 1952, RA, UD HP, vol. 347). Immediately on his return from Stockholm Brandt told Kurt Schumacher that certain members of the Swedish government were convinced that the Stalin Note was to be taken seriously and offered a real possibility of reunification. Under the influence of his visit to Stockholm, Brandt advised the SPD leader to make the party’s position on the German question clearer and firmer so as to present an alternative to Adenauer’s policy. Brandt, who in 1951 still rejected the idea of a neutral Germany on the Swedish or Finnish model in view of its geographical situation and enormous economic potential, told the SPD congress in Dortmund at the end of September 1952 (the first congress after Schumacher’s death) that this chance of reuniting Germany should not be passed over, even if it proved impossible for the reunited nation to be militarily or politically part of the Atlantic Alliance. However, in 1953 – perhaps as a consequence of the suppression of the workers’ revolt in the GDR – Brandt once again distanced himself from the idea of an unaligned Germany. See Wolfgang Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg, Koexistenz und kleine Schritte. Willy Brandt und die Deutschlandpolitik 1948–1963* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001), 129–30, 147 ff. When Erich Ollenhauer took over after Schumacher’s death, Herbert Wehner, who had not previously questioned Schumacher’s views on foreign policy, began to develop his own views on the German question. Unlike Schumacher, who (while spurning Soviet proposals for a neutral Germany) had uncompromisingly insisted that a reunited Germany must be free to choose its own alliances, Wehner was anxious ‘to gain the co-operation of those elements in the CDU who in 1945 had devised a “third way”, were willing to pay a certain price for reunification and were sceptical about integration’. Peter März, *Die Bundesrepublik zwischen Westintegration und Stalin-Noten. Zur deutschlandpolitischen Diskussion in der Bundesrepublik 1952 vor dem Hintergrund der westlichen und der sowjetischen Deutschlandpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982), 270.

32 Östen Undén, ‘Ist die deutsche Frage unlösbar?’ *Außenpolitik*, 5 (1954), 95–103.

33 However, the US ambassador in Stockholm was persuaded that ‘the aging Mr. Undén, whose retirement as Foreign Minister may not be far off’ was not necessarily expressing the views of the Swedish government, and pointed to a ‘positive evolution’ in Social Democrat opinion on questions of both foreign policy and security. Silva, *Keep Them Strong, Keep Them Friendly*, 206–8.

of Germany and conveyed this repeatedly to the Swedish envoy at meetings in the Chancery.³⁴ The federal government feared above all that Undén's highly public pronouncements on the German question would encourage both internal and external supporters of German neutrality and so hamper efforts to integrate the FRG quickly into the Western bloc.³⁵

Bonn was therefore extremely worried when, after the GDR was granted sovereignty on 25 March 1954, rumours began to circulate that Sweden was willing in principle to recognise the new state.³⁶ The Swedish government was quick to deny the rumours, but in actual fact Stockholm did seem to be contemplating at least a *de facto* recognition of the GDR.³⁷ Its acquisition of sovereignty had presented Sweden with a difficult problem, because the Soviet ambassador in Stockholm had stated that in future the East German authorities would be solely responsible for issuing transit visas through the GDR. The Soviets also confidently expected Sweden and the GDR to exchange diplomatic representation in the near future.³⁸ This put the Swedish government in a dilemma. On the one hand, they had to avoid a *de jure* recognition of the GDR at all costs; on the other, they had to ensure the smooth transit of traffic along the all-important Trelleborg–Sassnitz route. Undén suggested a compromise: the visa problem could be solved by setting up an East German visa office in Stockholm, without diplomatic status.³⁹

Bonn immediately jumped to the conclusion that this Swedish initiative was *de facto* recognition, if nothing worse. State secretary Wilhelm Grewe soon found himself on his way to Stockholm to make it clear to the Swedes that Bonn would in no circumstances whatsoever tolerate recognition of the GDR.⁴⁰ Grewe sounded the all-clear on his return, but thought that Sweden's attitude towards recognition needed careful monitoring, since it was obviously inclined to judge relations with the GDR in terms of 'very concrete national interests and viewpoints'.⁴¹ The federal government's fear of a Swedish *de facto* recognition of the GDR turned out to be unfounded, because East Berlin declined the Swedish invitation to set up a visa office without diplomatic status on the grounds of prestige: the GDR would settle for nothing less than full recognition.⁴² On the other hand, the GDR made no difficulties about granting transit visas for Swedish citizens entering Sassnitz – to the great relief of Bonn, where it was assumed

34 Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 53.

35 Note by state secretary Walter Hallstein, 6 June 1953, PA/AA, B 10, vol. 260; Kumlin, Swedish envoy in Bonn, to Undén, 17 June 1953, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 161.

36 Note by Jansen of the Auswärtiges Amt, 23 April 1954, PA/AA, B 10, vol. 298.

37 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 410; Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 38 ff.

38 Tamm, of the Swedish Consulate General in West Berlin, to the Utrikesdepartementet (Swedish Foreign Ministry), 29 March 1954 and 30 March 1954, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 4.

39 See Undén's diary entry for 5 April 1954, in Undén, *Anteckningar*, 469.

40 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 411; Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 40. Grewe mentions this trip to Stockholm in his memoirs: Wilhelm Grewe, *Rückblenden 1976–1951* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1979), 40.

41 Note by Grewe, 11 May 1954, PA/AA, Nachlass Grewe, vol. 47.

42 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 411.

that the Swedes would have no further need to reconsider their attitude towards recognition.⁴³

Equal relief was felt in Stockholm over the facilitation of transit through the GDR, and no further steps were taken in the direction of recognition. Undén, however, remained critical of the FRG's security policy. He thought that the chances of reuniting Germany had been substantially reduced by the failure of the 1952 Stalin Note and the granting of sovereignty to the GDR; but it was still possible that the German problem might eventually be solved through détente between the superpowers. He did not think that this aim would be served by integrating the FRG into a Western military alliance; on the contrary, it would encourage the formation of power blocs and perpetuate the division of Europe.⁴⁴ Rather than a policy predicated on alliances or blocs hostile to other countries, Undén preferred a 'collective security system' which would meet the needs not only of Germany but also of its neighbours.⁴⁵

Undén's views gained the approval of certain circles in the FRG. The Social Democrat Herbert Wehner referred to him in the press in January 1954 when warning against the premature formation of a European Defence Community, to the great annoyance of the federal government.⁴⁶ Even in the government's own camp there were those who were prepared to accept German neutrality as the price of reunification.⁴⁷ After the plan for a European Defence Community was shot down by the French Assembly in August 1954, Adenauer pressed the Americans to admit the FRG to NATO as soon as possible, in the teeth of French opposition, and warned of the 'neutralist currents' in the FRG who were getting political backing from the Swedish Foreign Minister, that is from Undén.⁴⁸

With the integration of the two German states into their respective military blocs – NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation – and the collapse of the Geneva Conference of the victorious powers in July 1955, the seal was set on the division of Germany. Stockholm had to adjust to the prospect of a long-term maintenance

43 Siegfried, of the Federal legation in Stockholm, to the Auswärtiges Amt, 3 July 1954, in PA/AA B 11, vol. 355; note by Brückner of the Auswärtiges Amt, 3 March 1955, PA/AA, B 12, vol. 98.

44 Report by Haack at the Federal German legation in Stockholm to the Auswärtiges Amt, 29 March 1954, PA/AA B 11, vol. 448.

45 Östen Undén, 'Die Weltanschauung der kollektiven Sicherheit', *Die neue Gesellschaft*, 2 (1955), 95–103.

46 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 409.

47 Hans-Erich Volkmann, 'Adenauer und die deutschlandpolitischen Opponenten in CDU und CSU', in Josef Foscchepoth, ed., *Adenauer und die deutsche Frage*, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 183–206. Certain right-wing liberals who spoke in favour of German neutrality were obviously inspired by Sweden: for example, the first West German envoy to Stockholm, Kurt Sieveking of the CDU, had congratulated Undén on Sweden's 'clever' policy of neutrality and criticised Adenauer's foreign and security policies (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 Jan. 1954). See also Undén's diary entry for 19.1953, in Undén, *Anteckningar*, 463. The most notable FDP example is Karl Georg Pfeleiderer, who rejected Adenauer's 'policy of strength' and, like Undén, preferred a collective security system. Pfeleiderer congratulated the Swedish envoy in Bonn on Sweden's neutrality policy and saw it as a model for a reunited Germany. Kumlín to the UD, 20 May 1954, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 170. Cf. Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 53–4.

48 Notes of a discussion between Chancellor Adenauer and Robert D. Murphy, Undersecretary in the US Department of State, 14 Sept. 1954, in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, vol. II/4 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 144–52 (145).

of the European status quo. While many Swedish Social Democrats saw a strong Western Europe – which also meant militarily strong – as a ‘certain guarantee of Sweden’s autonomy and the preservation of peace in the North’, and therefore saw the FRG’s integration into the Western defence alliance as a bonus for Swedish security, Undén held on to his vision of a ‘neutralised’ Germany even after 1955.⁴⁹ The fact that Soviet troops had vacated Austria only on condition that the Austrian government pledged itself to perpetual neutrality encouraged him to hope that a similar solution might be found for Germany.⁵⁰

The Swedish Foreign Ministry, however, was not willing to subscribe fully to Undén’s vision.⁵¹ Kumlin, as Swedish envoy in Bonn, expressed grave doubts about Undén’s analysis of the German problem. Kumlin deeply distrusted the USSR’s Germany policy and did not believe that Moscow had ever had any real interest in holding free elections in a united Germany.⁵² The former Foreign Minister, Rickard Sandler, described Undén’s vision as ‘Swedish wishful thinking’,⁵³ and downright sceptics lurked even among the Social Democrats. For example, Ture Nerman, a Social Democrat member of the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament), openly declared in favour of Adenauer’s pro-Western policy and warned against Soviet expansionism, which could only be curbed by integrating the FRG into the Western defence alliance.⁵⁴ Even the Prime Minister, Tage Erlander, did not fully share his Foreign Minister’s views and was more receptive to the ideas of the Western powers. He found it hard to believe that Undén’s preferred solution – an unaligned Germany guaranteed by the victorious powers and the United Nations – was really practicable. Erlander was not, in principle, adverse to the US demand for the FRG to be included in the Western military alliance. Like his Danish and Norwegian fellow travellers, he argued that such military integration of the FRG with the West would both prevent the formation of a vacuum in central Europe and remove the potential danger from an independent, reunited Germany.⁵⁵

Under the shadow of the Hallstein Doctrine: Sweden and the German problem from the mid-1950s

Although Undén and Erlander did not altogether agree in their assessments of the German problem, they were of one mind on the question of recognition. Both were convinced that it was not in Sweden’s interests to recognise the GDR. The

49 Klaus Misgeld, ‘Deutschland – immer wieder ein Problem. Die schwedische Sozialdemokratie, die SPD und die Deutschlandfrage im ersten Nachkriegsjahrzehnt’, in Wilhelm M. Carlgren, Martin Fritz and Ulf Olsson, eds., *Neuanfang. Beziehungen zwischen Schweden und Deutschland 1945–1954. Sieben Beiträge* (Stockholm: Militärhistoriska Förlaget, 1990), 165–77 (175).

50 Entry in Undén’s diary for 30 April 1955, in Undén, *Anteckningar*, 496.

51 Lennart Petri, *Sverige i stora världen. Minnen och reflexioner från 40 års diplomatjänst* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1996), 236.

52 Kumlin to Undén, 25 Dec. 1955, Kungliga Biblioteket Stockholm, L 108:1.

53 Quoted in Misgeld, *Sozialdemokratie*, 341, footnote 51.

54 Ture Nerman, *Trots allt! Minne och redovisning* (Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1954), 248.

55 Misgeld, *Sozialdemokratie*, 455, 491 ff.

Swedish government feared both the reaction from the West German government and the Western powers and the impact on their Social Democrat friends in the FRG, who had made it abundantly clear that they did not want the GDR to be recognised.⁵⁶ Undén, however, took the view that the GDR's existence could not simply be ignored.⁵⁷ In a letter to the Swedish envoy in Bonn he described the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* as an 'untenable thesis'. This did not of course mean that Undén wanted to recognise the GDR, but he could not simply accept the federal government as the sole representative of the German people.⁵⁸ For this reason he had not restored the complete inventory of the former Reich embassy in Stockholm to the FRG – only three-quarters of it.⁵⁹

At first, the Auswärtiges Amt (the West German Foreign Ministry) had set down Sweden's attitude towards the GDR as completely uncertain.⁶⁰ Although Undén assured the West German ambassador in Stockholm that Sweden's attitude to the GDR had not changed and that there was no chance of Sweden's recognising that country, he would not guarantee that this attitude would never change in future. For as long as the division of Germany remained a problem, he reserved the right to reconsider his own standpoint on the recognition question.⁶¹ In reality Sweden's room for manoeuvre on the German question was extremely limited. Undén must have known this, at least by December 1955 when Kumlin reported the results of the ambassadors' conference which had resolved to sever relations with any state that might recognise the GDR.⁶² At the beginning of January 1956 the British ambassador assured the Swedish Foreign Ministry – meaning Undén – that Britain would be supporting the FRG's new diplomatic threat (or weapon)⁶³, which was later to be christened the 'Hallstein Doctrine' after its initiator, the state secretary at the Foreign Ministry, Walter Hallstein.⁶⁴

56 Tamm, of the Swedish Consulate General in West Berlin, to the UD concerning a conversation with Willy Brandt, 26 April 1955, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 179.

57 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 414.

58 'Jag har fäst mig vid att Adenauer numera fått franskt och eng. stöd för sin omöjl. tes att Västy:s reg. repr. hela Tyska riket. Sv. kan ju inte följa med i den svängen. Vi är visserl. ytterst försiktiga i vårt fhld. till Östty. o har inga planer på erkännande. Men vi vidmakthåller de förbind. som vi finner av praktiska skäl påkallande och som under äldre tid skulle ha betytt ett de facto-erkännande. Vi kan inte betrakta Östtyskland som rena tomrummet.' Handwritten note from Undén to Kumlin, 19 Oct. 1955, Kungliga Biblioteket Stockholm, L 108:2.

59 Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 40.

60 Note by the Auswärtiges Amt, 28 Sept. 1955, PA/AA, B 12, vol. 85.

61 Undén's memo of a conversation with Siegfried, the German envoy, 2 Dec. 1955, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 6.

62 Kumlin, Swedish envoy in Bonn, to the UD, 12 Dec. 1955 and 13 Dec. 1955, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 188.

63 UD memo on visit from Holliday, counsellor to the British embassy, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 7. See also Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 414–15.

64 See Rüdiger Marco Booz, *'Hallsteinzeit' – Deutsche Außenpolitik 1955–1972* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995); William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War. The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany 1949–1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Werner Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin. Der diplomatische Krieg zwischen der BRD und der DDR 1955–1973* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001).

As a result Sweden's position on recognition remained unchanged for the next few years, although in 1956 the Swedes agreed to the establishment of a Stockholm office for East German Railways and in 1957 one for the (non-government) GDR Chamber of Commerce, so long as they confined themselves strictly to matters of travel and trade.⁶⁵ So that the rest of the world might be left in no doubt as to Sweden's position on the recognition question, in spring 1957 the Foreign Ministry ruled that 'East Germany' should be used as a purely geographical term, whereas West Germany should be treated as a state under the official name of 'Federal Republic of Germany'.⁶⁶ Whatever misgivings Sweden might have, it was toeing the Western non-recognition line. When all was said and done, the government had no choice: the severing of diplomatic relations between Bonn and Belgrade after Yugoslavia recognised the GDR in September 1957 made it quite clear that the Hallstein Doctrine was to be taken seriously.⁶⁷

Bonn showed its gratitude for Swedish loyalty on the recognition question and, after lengthy negotiations, announced in March 1956 that it was willing to abandon its claims for damages and restoration of confiscated German assets in Sweden while recognising the Swedish Liquidation and Clearing Law.⁶⁸ Undén reciprocated a few months later by expressing his willingness to restore the remaining assets of the former Reich legation in Stockholm – which was tantamount to acknowledging that Sweden saw the FRG as the sole heir to the German Reich. This removed a stumbling block which had bedevilled the postwar relationship between Sweden and the FRG for years. In token of this improvement in relations, Bonn and Stockholm agreed to elevate their legations to the status of embassies from 13 April 1956.⁶⁹

In the later 1950s Undén became more and more reluctant to speak about the German problem. The prospect of healing the division of Germany became far more remote after the two states had been drafted into antagonistic military blocs, and even within the SPD few could now see any realistic alternative to membership of NATO.⁷⁰ Sweden stuck to its decision not to recognise the GDR. When in

65 Memo by Hamilton of the UD, 16 Jan. 1956, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 6; Memo, UD (copy), 27 Sept. 1957, Riksarkivet Stockholm, SUK, hemliga arkivet, F 2:13. When the head of the East German Chamber of Commerce gave a diplomatic reception on the GDR's national day on 7 October 1958, the FRG complained and the Swedish Foreign Ministry immediately told the Aliens Registration Bureau to threaten him with expulsion unless he confined himself strictly to matters of trade. Memo by Hennings of the UD, 14 Oct. 1958; Siegbahn of the UD to SUK, 18 Oct. 1958, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 8; Hilgard of the Stockholm embassy to the Auswärtiges Amt, 15 Oct. 1958, PA/AA, B 12, vol. 98; UD memo, 16 Oct. 1958.

66 Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 416.

67 Jöhdahl, of the Swedish embassy in Bonn, to Undén, 21 Oct. 1957, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 208 b.

68 In July 1946, under pressure from the Western allies, the Swedish government had signed the 'Washington Agreement' which obliged it to liquidate all German assets in Sweden. The Allied demands extended not only to German flight capital sent to neutral countries abroad towards the end of the war, but also to legally acquired German property. The proceeds of the liquidation were divided between the Allies, who used them as reparations, and the Swedes, who used them to offset Swedish claims against the German Reich in a compulsory clearing operation. Cf. Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 59 ff.

69 *Ibid.*, 42–3, 277 ff.

70 Stephan Artner, *A Change of Course. The West German Social Democrats and NATO 1957–1961* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 55–62.

March 1960 the Communists in the Riksdag called for recognition, Undén answered that it would give the outside world the impression that Sweden considered the division of Germany to be permanent – an impression that the Swedish government wished to avoid because it still hoped for reunification.⁷¹ However, Undén had frankly admitted to the West German ambassador in Stockholm, Hans-Ulrich von Marchtaler, that Sweden's chilly attitude towards the GDR was chiefly motivated by Sweden's respect for the federal government's own Germany policy.⁷²

Michael Scholz considers that by around 1960 Undén was 'finding it necessary to revise his former ideas on the solution to the German question', especially as the failure of the SPD's 1959 'plan for Germany', which put the FRG's NATO membership on the line in the cause of German reunification, had annihilated all prospects of reunification in the foreseeable future.⁷³ The construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 seemed to have put the final seal on the division and made Undén's favoured 'solution through understanding' all but inconceivable.⁷⁴ A few months after Krushchev's Berlin ultimatum, Willy Brandt had met with Undén and Erlander and come away with the impression that the Swedes were rather inclining towards recognition of the GDR.⁷⁵

Evidently, once the West had given up all hope of a reunification, Undén thought that the most realistic and irenic policy would be to bow to the status quo, accept Soviet demands for evacuation of the Berlin exclave and recognise the GDR, which in his opinion already fulfilled most criteria for an independent state in international law.⁷⁶ He saw the unresolved German question principally as a security risk, especially in view of the aspiration of certain Conservative politicians in the FRG to equip the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons.⁷⁷ He rejected Adenauer's 'policy of strength' and confrontational attitude towards the East, considering them highly dangerous and likely to exacerbate the conflict.⁷⁸ Undén now thought that German reunification would only be possible in the long term and through détente between the two blocs.⁷⁹

71 Riksdagens Protokoll 1960, första kammaren, No. 10, 30 March 1960, 47.

72 Memo by Undén, 11 April 1960, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 9; note by Haack of the Auswärtiges Amt on a conversation with the Swedish diplomat Göran-Fredrik von Otter, 14 April 1960, PA/AA, B 23, vol. 175. See also Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 416.

73 Ibid.

74 Andreas Linderoth, 'Schweden und der Bau der Berliner Mauer', in Heiner Timmermann, ed., *1961 – Mauerbau und Außenpolitik* (Münster: Lit, 2002), 245–267 (262–3).

75 Note by Willy Brandt, 18 April 1959, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie Bonn, Willy-Brandt-Archiv, Berlin, file 92. Cf. Wolfgang Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg, Koexistenz und kleine Schritte. Willy Brandt und die Deutschlandpolitik 1948–1963* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001), 272.

76 Entry in Undén's diary, 7 Sept. 1961, in Undén, *Anteckningar*, 648; Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 416.

77 See Undén's remarks in the Riksdag: Riksdagens Protokoll 1959, andra kammaren, No. 7, 11 March 1959, 22–3; cf. Kaj Björk, 'Atombomb i valkampanj', *Ny Tid*, 15 July 1957.

78 'Adenauer är en verklig fara. Han driver en politik efter sina fixa idéer...' (Adenauer is a real danger. He is following a policy based on his own *idée fixe*): Undén's diary, 10 May 1960, in Undén, *Anteckningar*, 611.

79 This is the background to the 'Undén plan' which he laid before the UN General Assembly in New York on 26 October 1961. Building on suggestions by the Polish Foreign Minister, Adam Rapacki, Undén suggested creating a 'non-nuclear club' of states which would proceed to establish nuclear-free zones. This might put an end to the arms race and limit the risk of nuclear war. See Hans Lödén,

Despite reservations about the FRG's Germany policy, the Swedish government did not contemplate changing its stance on recognition. Hallstein had repeatedly warned the Swedish ambassador in Bonn that the federal government would view even an exchange of consulates as 'recognition' and would punish any such 'unfriendly act' by imposing appropriate sanctions.⁸⁰ In view of Sweden's moves to associate itself with the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European free trade zone in the early 1960s, absolute priority had to be given to smoothing relations with Europe's leading economic power.⁸¹ Erlander and his new Foreign Minister, Torsten Nilsson, who had replaced Undén in September 1962, therefore rejected demands for recognition from Communists in the Riksdag on the grounds that so long as there was still hope of German reunification, Sweden did not want to be the first European country to recognise the GDR and thus admit that the split was definitive.⁸² Inside the Foreign Ministry things were seen somewhat differently: the division was bound to last for many years, and the main reason for not recognising the GDR was, frankly, fear of the Hallstein Doctrine.⁸³ Since the FRG refused to budge on the German problem, the Foreign Ministry in Stockholm saw no room for Sweden to change its stance on recognition.⁸⁴

Swedish support for Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik

Exasperation with the Hallstein Doctrine and the FRG's stiff-necked attitude to the German problem increased sharply in Sweden from the mid-1960s. It was seen as the main stumbling block to European détente.⁸⁵ Still Sweden's official attitude to the GDR did not change. Federal Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and his Foreign Minister, Gerhard Schröder, had emphasised once again during a state visit to Sweden in September 1966 that the federal government was sticking to the Hallstein

'För säkerhets skull.' Ideologi och säkerhet i svensk aktiv utrikespolitik 1950–1975 (Stockholm: Nerenius & Santérus, 1999), 256 ff.

80 Memo by Åkerman of the UD, 12 July 1961, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 10; Jödahl, of the Swedish embassy in Bonn, to Åström in the UD, 19 Sept. 1961, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 240 b.

81 The founding of the EEC in 1957 and of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) two years later threatened to split Western Europe into two separate trade blocs. Sweden, along with Austria and Switzerland, sought economic links with the EEC after Denmark and Britain applied to join in summer 1961. Sweden felt compelled to make this move, despite misgivings on the neutrality issue, for fear of being sidelined economically. The French vetoing of Britain's application in early 1963 put a temporary stop to the Sweden's bid for association. From the neutrality point of view this was a relief; from the economic point of view, a worry. The prospect of EEC external tariffs in 1964 aroused Swedish fears of trade restrictions due to a heightened tariff barrier between the EEC and EFTA. Sweden hoped that the FRG would support its attempts to break down customs barriers between the two organisations. See Plappert, *Bevorzugte Partner*, 121 ff.; Lee Miles, *Sweden and European Integration* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

82 Riksdagens Protokoll 1963, första kammaren, No. 17, 23 April 1963, 28.

83 Memo by Blix of the UD, 25 April 1963, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 11.

84 Memo by Engfeldt of the UD, 19 Sept. 1963, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 12; Jödahl, of the Swedish embassy in Bonn, to Åström in the UD, 17 Oct. 1963, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 249.

85 A poll by a leading opinion research institute in 1966 showed a clear majority of the Swedish population in favour of recognition, irrespective of party allegiance. See Ekengren, *Erkännandepolitik*, 122, 261–3; Linderoth, *Kampen*, 190–1.

Doctrine and Sweden was expected to stay in line.⁸⁶ An internal memorandum indicates that the Swedish government feared that any rapprochement with the GDR would have dire economic consequences for Sweden which had to be avoided at all costs.⁸⁷ The Swedish Social Democrats put all their hopes in the SPD, which had formed a grand coalition with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) after the 1966 elections and so got its foot in the government door for the first time. The policy statement by the new Federal Chancellor, Kurt Georg Kiesinger of the CDU, the first to identify détente rather than reunification as the primary aim of West German foreign policy, was heartily welcomed in Sweden. Indeed, the Swedish view was that reunification would be impossible without European détente.⁸⁸

Hopes rested above all on the new Foreign Minister, Willy Brandt. His 'gradualist' policy, already mooted during his later years as mayor of West Berlin as a *modus vivendi* with the GDR, had won not just sympathy but also political support from the Swedes: in 1966 the Swedish consul general in West Berlin, Sven Backlund, had several times brokered meetings between Brandt and the Soviet ambassador to East Berlin, Piotr Abrassimov.⁸⁹ Brandt had been critical of the Hallstein Doctrine and had repeatedly warned that its use was making the FRG increasingly vulnerable to political blackmail as Third World countries demanded lavish development and economic aid in return for not recognising the GDR.⁹⁰ However, the Social Democrats had difficulty introducing their views on the German question into the Grand Coalition. Kiesinger did initiate a cautious reorientation of relations with the GDR, but there was no notion of renouncing the Hallstein Doctrine.⁹¹

The two Foreign Ministers, Brandt and Nilsson, old acquaintances from Brandt's Scandinavian exile in the 1930s and 1940s, worked closely together.⁹² Nilsson recommended Brandt's policies to the heads of East European missions accredited to Stockholm, and exploited Sweden's excellent contacts with East European states to promote the SPD's proposals for détente.⁹³ With an eye to the many advocates

86 Note on discussions between Nilsson and Schröder, 2 Sept. 1966, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 258; PA/AA, B 31, vol. 390.

87 UD memo re East Germany, 23 March 1966, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 14.

88 Ekengren, *Erkännandepolitik*, 257.

89 Backlund, Swedish consul general in West Berlin, to the UD, 11 May 1966 and 8 June 1966, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 256. See also Lars-Göran Engfeldt, 'Sven Backlund', in Gunnar Artéus and Leif Leifland, eds., *Svenska diplomatprofiler under 1900-talet* (Stockholm: Probus, 2001), 410–40 (414 ff.); Sverker Oredsson, *Svensk Oro. Offentlig fruktan i Sverige under 1900-talets senare hälft* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 133–5.

90 Booz, 'Hallsteinzeit', 89–92.

91 Peter Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen. Vom Mauerbau bis zur Vereinigung* (Munich: dtv, 1995), 140–2.

92 Klaus Misgeld, 'Willy Brandt und Schweden – Schweden und Willy Brandt', in Einhart Lorenz, ed., *Perspektiven aus den Exiljahren: Wissenschaftlicher Workshop in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Nordeuropa-Institut der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin am 9. Februar 2000* (Berlin: Verlag der Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung, 2000).

93 Note on a discussion between Brandt and Nilsson in Stockholm, 22 June 1967, PA/AA, B 150, vol. 105; Brandt to Erlander, 22 July 1968, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 268; Nilsson to Brandt, 5 Nov. 1968, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Willy-Brandt-Archiv, Außenminister, file 7. Cf. Torsten Nilsson, *Lag eller näve* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1980), 183.

of recognition in his own party, Nilsson was of the opinion that Sweden should take no steps on its own account that might get in the way of the FRG's Germany policy.⁹⁴ It should treat the German question as something to be settled by the Great Powers and the Germans themselves; no independent action by the Swedes was likely to improve matters. Rather Sweden should work to improve co-operation between East and West, since a climate of international détente was a prerequisite for solving the German question.⁹⁵

Alongside solidarity with the SPD, the Swedish attitude to recognition was decisively affected by another factor that was seldom openly debated. Foreign Ministry records show that the Swedes felt that their room for manoeuvre was being ever more restricted by the enormous economic leverage the FRG could exercise over their country. Moreover, as the strongest economy in the EEC, the FRG had to have the biggest say on Sweden's attempts at a rapprochement with the Community.⁹⁶ Britain's application for entry in 1967 had reawakened interest in Sweden, especially as Denmark, Norway and Ireland had followed in Britain's footsteps and Sweden feared that this might lead to its own economic isolation.⁹⁷

The Swedish government welcomed the formation of the West German socialist–liberal coalition of 1969, which it saw as a decisive step towards European détente. In his first official statement as Federal Chancellor, on 28 October 1969, Brandt for the first time acknowledged the statehood of the GDR and spoke in favour of rapprochement with East Berlin – although he added that the two Germanys could not view each other as foreign countries and that the federal government's attitude to the international relations of the GDR depended essentially on attitude of the SED leadership.⁹⁸ The federal government had no interest in a premature wave of recognitions of the GDR, but it could keep renunciation of the non-recognition policy in reserve as a negotiating tool against the SED leadership so as to force Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader, to make concessions on the intra-German front. The Swedish Foreign Ministry was immediately informed of the new federal approach to the German question, which was dubbed 'the Scheel Doctrine' after the current Free Democrat (FDP) Foreign Minister, Walter Scheel.⁹⁹ With regard to the lifting of the embargo on the GDR, Bonn made it clear that this would not happen until East Berlin was willing to co-operate with federal efforts to

94 Riksdagens Protokoll 1967, andra kammaren, No. 12, 8 March 1967, 76–80.

95 Motion 1969, första kammaren, No. 93, 1 Jan. 1969, 3; Riksdagens Protokoll 1969, andra kammaren, No. 4, 5 Feb. 1969, 57; Riksdagens Protokoll 1969, första kammaren, No. 13, 26 March 1969, 68; Utrikesutskottets utåtande 1969, No. 18, 18 Sept. 1969, 3–4; Riksdagens Protokoll 1969, andra kammaren, No. 39, 3 Dec. 1969, 66.

96 Ekengren, *Erkännandepolitik*, 273–86.

97 The Swedish government believed that supranationalism in the EEC was tending to decrease, and unlike in 1961, when Sweden had sought only association, it did not now exclude *ex ante* the possibility of full membership, so long as the EEC respected its policy of neutrality. See Nils Andrén, *Maktbalans och alliansfrihet. Svensk utrikespolitik under 1900-talet* (Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1996), 140–1.

98 Statement by Chancellor Willy Brandt, 28 Oct. 1969, in Ingo von Münch, ed., *Regierungserklärungen 1949–1973* (Berlin and New York: Verlag Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 230.

99 Booz, 'Hallsteinzeit', 139 ff.

find a reasonable *modus vivendi*. Until that happened the FRG expected other states to hold off from recognising the GDR.¹⁰⁰ In Bonn opinions were divided, however, on how to treat individual states that jumped the gun. Scheel himself did not want officially to exclude the possibility of severing diplomatic relations in such cases.¹⁰¹

Sweden's new Prime Minister, Olof Palme, and Nilsson, still Foreign Minister, assured Brandt that the Swedish government would fully support his policies on Germany and the East and that Sweden was 'in no way' considering *de jure* recognition of the GDR; it would remain responsive to intra-German developments.¹⁰² However, counting on a future normalisation of intra-German relations – however long that might take – Sweden did begin gradually to open up to the GDR, not wanting to 'lag behind' other neutral countries with regard to the German question. By April 1970 the Swedes were at last prepared to receive a representative of the East German Foreign Ministry for discussions at the corresponding ministry in Stockholm – though they were still very careful to keep contacts with the GDR at an unofficial level so as leave Bonn in no doubt as to Sweden's loyalty. Hence the West German embassy in Stockholm was informed in detail about the discussions with Kurt Nier, head of the northern Europe department of the East German Foreign Ministry, and was assured that this was a mere exchange of political information which had no bearing on Sweden's attitude towards recognition.¹⁰³ For the same reason this meeting, and others which followed at approximately six-monthly intervals between Nier and Rune Nyström, head of the East Europe department in the Swedish Foreign Ministry, took place not at the ministry itself but in a restaurant or in Nyström's private residence, emphasising the unofficial character of the relationship. East German demands for rapid normalisation were regularly repulsed by the Swedes on the grounds that relations between the two Germanys had yet to be sorted out.¹⁰⁴

Undeterred, the GDR continued its attempts to establish contacts with Sweden and other European neutrals, but concentrated most of all on Finland and Switzerland, where its influence was judged to be strongest.¹⁰⁵ Switzerland seemed prepared to make concessions in the hope that East Berlin would reciprocate by being more accommodating over the question of compensation for Swiss private assets confiscated in the GDR.¹⁰⁶ Finland had a particular interest in settling persistent legal and financial

100 Aide-mémoire from the federal government to the UD, 31 Oct. 1969, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 276.

101 Booz, 'Hallsteinzeit', 142.

102 Montan, of the Swedish embassy in Bonn, to Brandt, 3 Oct. 1969, AdsD, Willy-Brandt-Archiv, Außenminister, file 7; Montan to Wachtmeister in the UD, reporting a discussion with Brandt as Chancellor, 22 Jan. 1970, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 277; Nilsson, 'Därför erkänner vi inte DDR', *Arbetet*, 23 Nov. 1969.

103 West German embassy in Stockholm to the Auswärtiges Amt, 16 April 1970, PA/AA, B 31, vol. 390.

104 Memos by Nyström of the UD, 4 March 1971, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 24; 1 Sept. 1971, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 288; Nier's report on his trip to Sweden, 17 April 1970, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv Berlin (SAPMO), DY 30/IV A 2/20/583.

105 Therese Steffen Gerber, *Das Kreuz mit Hammer, Zirkel, Ährenkranz. Die Beziehungen zwischen der Schweiz und der DDR in den Jahren 1949–1972* (Berlin: Spitz Verlag, 2002), 227.

106 *Ibid.*, 222–3.

questions relating mostly to war damage caused by German troops. Evidently the Finns hoped that these claims could be brought into the recognition process. On 10 September 1971 the Finnish government sent identical notes to both German states proposing a commencement of diplomatic relations.¹⁰⁷

Bonn noted with relief that as soon as the Finnish initiative became known, the Swedish Foreign Minister, Krister Wickman, had told journalists that Sweden would not be adopting the Finnish position on recognition – which did something to forestall a chain reaction.¹⁰⁸ The FRG feared that other countries might cave in at last to East German and Soviet pressure and cease to toe the West German line; it was scarcely to be expected that they would be forever content to let Bonn use the sovereign right to open diplomatic relations (or not) as a negotiating tool.¹⁰⁹

In summer 1972 the neutral European countries' boycott of the GDR began to crumble. Up to then Brandt had been able to dissuade the Finns from going it alone, but now Helsinki had lost patience and at the end of July 1972 it began negotiations with the GDR over the commencement of diplomatic relations.¹¹⁰ The Swiss were also willing to come to an agreement with the GDR: in August 1972, just after signing a free trade agreement with the EEC, Switzerland and the GDR arranged an exchange of governmental trade delegations with consular rights.¹¹¹ Bonn realised with relief that Austria and Sweden did not intend to follow in the footsteps of the Finns or the Swiss. The Austrian Chancellor, Social Democrat Bruno Kreisky, who had known Willy Brandt during their common exile in Sweden, had assured his West German opposite number that despite increasing pressure from his own party, he would continue to follow Bonn's timetable.¹¹² Sweden, for its part, continued to temporise as regards normalising relations with East Berlin, but in view of the significant moves by Bern and Helsinki it felt justified in making an official gesture: in summer 1972 the Swedes at last consented to invite the head of the GDR Foreign Ministry's northern Europe department to Stockholm for formal talks, which for the first time were held on the premises of the Foreign Ministry itself. In August 1972 Nyström paid a return visit to East Berlin to discuss the European Security Conference; but he scrupulously avoided all mention of the recognition question.¹¹³

107 Seppo Hentilä, 'Das Deutschland-Paket der finnischen Regierung 1971/72: Diplomatische Anerkennung – aber um welchen Preis?' in Edgar Hösch et al., eds., *Deutschland und Finnland im 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 169–198; Putensen, *Konfliktfeld*, 258 ff.

108 Swedish embassy in Bonn to UD, 14 Sept. 1971, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 25.

109 Booz, *Hallsteinzeit*, 152.

110 The Finnish Foreign Ministry stressed, however, that the fact that it had negotiated first with the GDR in no way infringed the principle of parity, because the offer of negotiations had been made to both Germanys simultaneously and did not imply recognition of the GDR. Moreover, the Finnish government had decided to recognise both German states simultaneously. See Hentilä, 'Deutschland-Paket', 185.

111 Steffen-Gerber, *Schweiz*, 346.

112 Petri, of the Swedish embassy in Vienna, to Wachtmeister in the UD, 4 July 1972, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 28.

113 Note by Nier of the Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten Ost-Berlin (MfAA, Ministry for Foreign Affairs in East Berlin), 2 June 1972, on a conversation with Rune Nyström on 1 June 1972,

The West Germans learned of Nyström's visit from the press, and reacted with surprising sharpness. The West German ambassador, Adolf Obermayer, stressed that nothing was further from his government's mind than to interfere in Sweden's affairs, but it would have been taken kindly if Sweden had discussed the matter with the embassy. Obermayer believed that Nyström's talks in East Berlin had not exactly strengthened the FRG's position in its negotiations with the GDR.¹¹⁴ This reaction surprised the Swedes and alerted them to Bonn's extreme sensitivity towards any upgrading of the GDR's status, even if it remained below the threshold of diplomatic recognition. Nyström (now an adviser to the government) noted in a memo of September 1972 that Sweden was 'treading in a minefield' with regard to the German question, and despite the improving climate of détente ought not to underestimate the danger of a negative reaction from the FRG. Nyström reiterated that it was scarcely in Sweden's interests to damage its relations with Bonn by storming ahead on the recognition question, because the FRG, as Sweden's biggest trading partner, was far more important to its than the GDR. It is clear that the Swedish Foreign Ministry could not ignore the possibility of economic retaliation if Sweden jumped the gun on recognition.¹¹⁵ Wickman, the Foreign Minister, assured the West German ambassador that Sweden was not thinking of changing its stance.¹¹⁶

By the end of November 1972, with signing of the Basic Treaty between the two Germanys imminent, Stockholm began negotiations with East Berlin on the question of opening diplomatic relations. At the request of the Auswärtiges Amt, the Swedish Foreign Ministry had avoided express recognition and merely announced that diplomatic relations had begun. Bonn did not want explicit recognition to give the impression that Sweden accepted the division of Germany into two states.¹¹⁷ Finally, on 21 December 1972, the day of signature of the Basic Treaty between the two Germanys, the agreement came into effect and the way was clear for an exchange of diplomatic representation between East Berlin and Stockholm.

Conclusion

The Swedish Foreign Minister Östen Undén was opposed to Chancellor Adenauer's 'policy of strength' from the early 1950s, and Sweden's relations with the FRG were severely strained by Undén's vision of Germany, which was very close to the Soviet notion of a reunited but neutral state – something which appealed to certain elements

PA/AA-MfAA, C 336/74; memo by Nyström on talks in East Berlin on 15 Aug. 1972, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 295.

114 Memo by Jödahl of the UD, 24 Aug. 1972, UDA, HP 1 Ct, del 295.

115 Memo by Nyström, 7 Sept. 1972, UDA, HP 12 Ct, del 29. Cf. Ekengren, *Av hänsyn till folkkrätten*, 283–6.

116 Note by Blech of the AA/II A 1, 9 Oct. 1972, PA/AA, B 38, vol. 1433; Stöcker in the Stockholm embassy to the Auswärtiges Amt, 27 Oct. 1972, PA/AA, B 31, vol. 429.

117 Von Staden of the Auswärtiges Amt to the Stoecker in the Stockholm Embassy, 1 Dec. 1972, in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1972)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), doc. 390, 1758–60.

in the FRG itself.¹¹⁸ The Bonn government feared above all that Undén's overt support for a neutral Germany would strengthen the advocates of such a policy and endanger the FRG's integration into the West. Where the GDR was concerned, Bonn saw Sweden as a somewhat unreliable ally: Undén's April 1954 proposal to set up an East German visa office in Stockholm aroused fears that in certain circumstances Sweden might be willing to make a *de facto* or even *de jure* recognition. Unlike the NATO states, Sweden had not officially recognised either the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* or the Hallstein Doctrine. However, Bonn's fear of a change in Swedish attitudes towards recognition were to prove unfounded: the Swedes broadly fell in line with the Western defence community, and from this viewpoint Stockholm's attitude to the German question could in no wise be described as neutral. The main reason for this was fear of the Hallstein Doctrine, especially as the FRG had already become Sweden's most important trading partner by the early 1950s. Sweden's attempts to associate itself with the EEC and/or the European free trade area in the early 1960s also encouraged the fostering of good relations with Europe's leading economic power.¹¹⁹

Sweden's stance on the German question was influenced not only by economic considerations but also by questions of security: in view of the nuclear arms race, an unstable Germany represented an enormous security risk for Sweden as a near neighbour, and a permanent potential for conflict that hindered European *détente*. Only against this background is it possible to understand Undén's vision of German politics in the 1950s and his proposals for a reunited, neutral Germany. After the Berlin crisis had made the division of Germany seem irrevocable, Undén decided it would be more realistic, and more conducive to peace, to yield to the USSR's demands regarding Berlin and the German question and recognise the GDR, at least *de facto*, since in his eyes it already possessed most of the characteristics of an independent state in international law. However, the Swedes never seriously considered recognition.

Brandt's succession to the Chancery and the formulation of the Scheel Doctrine substantially reduced the potential threat from Bonn; but the Swedish Foreign Ministry still thought that the FRG's political and economic importance as Sweden's most important trading partner could not be ignored when assessing the extent of Swedish room for manoeuvre on the recognition question. When Sweden renewed its overtures to the EEC in the late 1960s–early 1970s, leading to the signing of a free trade agreement between Sweden and the EEC in July 1972, good relations with Bonn continued to take priority. Prime Minister Olof Palme and his Foreign Minister, Torsten Nilsson, supported Brandt's policy of *détente* and spoke internationally in favour of the SPD's *Ostpolitik*. Despite growing internal political pressure, Sweden was more willing than other European neutral states to shape its recognition policy in accordance with intra-German developments. If Sweden lent an ear to East German appeals for rapprochement, it was only to the extent that the FRG was moving towards normalising relations with the GDR.

118 See also Misgeld, *Deutschlandpolitik*, 165–78; Scholz, 'Östen Undén', 391–417; Plappert, *Zwangsclearing*, 52–8.

119 Cf. Ekengren, *Erkännandepolitik*, 303.

Towards the end of the 1960s the Swedish and German Social Democrats began to emphasise another aspect: after Palme and the erstwhile Scandinavian exile, Willy Brandt, almost simultaneously assumed national leadership in 1969, relations between the two parties became closer than ever. Party solidarity in itself made premature Swedish recognition of the GDR unthinkable. Moreover, Sweden's own security interests precluded it from endangering the SPD's policy of détente by jumping the gun on recognition. The socialist-liberal coalition had only a wafer-thin majority in the Bundestag and Brandt's Ostpolitik met with bitter opposition, especially from East German refugee organisations and among conservatives: the outcome of Bonn's programme of détente seemed quite uncertain, not to mention the fact that the failure of Ostpolitik could also have strangled at birth the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which Sweden supported, and endangered the whole process of European détente: this was a decisive argument in favour of Sweden's adhering to the timetable of the Scheel Doctrine when contemplating recognition.