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***Enemy springboard or
benevolent buffer?***

**Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation,
1920-1955**

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Contents

Introduction	5
Soviet attitudes in western and Soviet historiography	10
Great visions, small results: Nordic discussions of military cooperation, 1918-1949	14
The formation of Soviet attitudes: 1918-1934	19
Negative Soviet attitudes in the 1920s: the Baltic connection	20
The positive stand: the views of Georgii V. Chicherin	22
1934-35: The Soviet campaign against Nordic cooperation	28
1935-39: the return of the "realpolitik" approach	36
1935-36: Soviet policies in transition	36
1937-38: consolidation of Soviet realism	40
Finland: the key to Soviet Nordic policies	47
1938: Scandinavian communists propagate Nordic military cooperation	52
The end of the Nordic alternative: Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation during and after the Second World War	59
Conclusions	68
NOTES	77

Introduction

What follows is a study of Soviet attitudes towards Nordic and Scandinavian¹ military and political cooperation from the early 1920s to the mid-1950s. One would not expect the Soviet leadership to be supportive of the idea of Nordic political and military cooperation. Until Gorbachev launched his *new thinking* in foreign affairs in the late 1980s, Soviet diplomacy tended to oppose the formation of political, economic or military regional groups among European states in the Soviet Union's immediate vicinity.² Some examples, although random and far from exhaustive, will illustrate the point. In the interwar period Polish foreign minister Józef Beck's ideas about a system of cooperating states from the Baltic to the Black Sea alarmed the Soviets, who saw in the Polish efforts an attempt create an additional anti-Soviet alliance system in the eastern part of Europe. The Soviets believed that the Polish plans of creating a "region of security" between Germany and the Soviet Union³ was part of the western policy of establishing a *cordon sanitaire* on the Soviet Union's western borders. During the war, Moscow's veto contributed to the failure of the Polish-Czechoslovak plan for a confederation in Central Europe.⁴ After the war, the Soviets withdrew their support for Tito's and Dimitrov's plans for a Balkan Yugoslav-Bulgarian confederation as soon as the enterprise began to get out of Soviet control and some of the other East European countries showed interest in the idea.⁵ In the following years, until the final breakdown of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, it was an important element of Soviet policy in the area to supervise and control the development of direct political and economic ties between the East European countries.⁶

On the face of it, Soviet policy towards the Northern countries confirmed this general picture. In the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s the Soviet press and diplomats repeatedly attacked the idea of Scandinavian or Nordic military and political cooperation. Then, following the Soviet-Finnish

ceasefire in March 1940, the Soviets vetoed plans for a Swedish-Finnish-Norwegian defence union which had been brought up by the Finns in the final stage of the negotiations leading to the end of the fighting. After the Second World War, as will be discussed later in this study, the Soviets opposed the formation of a Scandinavian defence union, notwithstanding the fact that Denmark's and Norway's choice, formally at least, was between Scandinavian or Atlantic alliance commitments.⁷ The experience of Soviet rejection of regional cooperation in general, repeated Soviet criticism of all forms of Nordic and Scandinavian cooperation in the 1920s and first part of the 1930s, and finally the outspoken Soviet opposition to the idea during and after the Second World War, led most Nordic politicians and observers to the following conclusions:

In the inter war period and until the second half of the 1950s the Soviet Union was consistently opposed to schemes of Nordic or Scandinavian military cooperation. Soviet opposition was even extended to non-military cooperation: political, economic and cultural. Moscow's basic assumption was that a Scandinavian or Nordic regional group would extend the influence of the Western great powers right up to the very borders of the Soviet Union.

On the European and global scale Soviet attitudes towards schemes of regional cooperation were not, however, consistently negative. At times the Soviet government approved, or even encouraged, regional cooperation between states close to the Soviet Union itself. From Klaus Tömudd's detailed study of the topic it appears that (from the perspective of the early 1960s) Soviet positive interest in regional cooperation had "at least two peaks - the middle of the 1930s and the middle or second half of the 1950s". In the mid-1930s the Soviet Union was interested in regional cooperation in Europe under the auspices of the League of Nations. At the latter time, the Soviet Union played a more active part, participating and even initiating new forms of regional cooperation.⁸

I will argue that also with regard to Northern regional military and political cooperation Soviet attitudes were more complex and fluid than is often taken for granted in the limited western literature on the topic. The Soviet attitude at any given moment depended on both the broader framework of Soviet European and global policies, and on Soviet perceptions of Nordic policies. However, as a result of ambiguities in the Soviet position and the nature of Soviet signalling, public opinion and policy makers in the Northern countries were often unaware of the changes in the Soviet attitude.

Soviet attitudes towards Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation demonstrated some of the contradictions and basic ambiguities which characterized Soviet foreign policy to its final ending. Much has been written about the two basic trends in Soviet foreign relations. The first, the *revolutionary* trend, was until 1943 represented by the Communist International, the Comintern, and thereafter by CPSU organs specifically designed to continue the tasks of the Comintern.⁹ The other, what could be called a pragmatic or *realpolitik* tradition, had a stronger foothold in the other main foreign policy institution of the Soviet state, the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Narkomindel, in March 1946 renamed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰ This was not, however, just an institutional conflict. It was an ambivalence inherent in the foreign policy makers themselves, and part of the foreign policy making process on all levels. It was a struggle between two sets of world views, on the one hand the idiosyncratic bolshevik interpretation of the world, with its penchant for gross generalizations, holistic approaches, and conspiratorial theories; and on the other hand mainstream traditional western diplomatic thinking, with its emphasis on balance-of-power and military-strategic reasoning. Georgii Chicherin, the Soviet state's first real foreign minister, a learned man trained in the art of traditional Russian diplomacy,¹¹ was the embodiment of the conflicting tendencies which made up the foreign policy of the Soviet state in its

early years. In such an environment it is hardly surprising that Soviet foreign policy, as it emerged from the various policy-making bodies and centra in Moscow, could be ambiguous and even pursue conflicting goals.¹²

I will argue that the changing Soviet attitudes towards Nordic political and military cooperation, being not only a reflection of fluctuations in the external conditions, mirrored these conflicting tendencies or schools of thought within the Soviet foreign policy establishment. There were divisions on the issue among the Soviet foreign policy decisionmakers and between foreign policy institutions. As a result, Soviet policy became ambiguous or even contradictory. In the following, the predominant and basically negative attitude to Nordic cooperation will be linked to the "bolshevik idiosyncratic" interpretation of international politics, and I will argue that the alternative positive approach mirrored the "realpolitik" tradition in Soviet foreign policy.

The analysis is primarily focused on Soviet attitudes towards the idea of a Nordic or Scandinavian military "bloc", i.e. some sort of defensive alliance between one combination or another of the four Nordic or the three Scandinavian countries. However, the Soviets themselves, with their penchant for thinking in terms of sinister "behind-the-scene" forces and with their holistic understanding of politics, stubbornly viewed all aspects of Nordic foreign policies, not least the idea of Nordic cooperation, from the point of view of their real or imagined military-strategic ramifications. To some degree this holds true for both traditions alluded to above, although the conspiratorial interpretation of world politics to a particularly high degree was part of the bolshevik world view. Thus Soviet attitudes to other forms of Nordic cooperation were intertwined with Soviet policy with regard to military cooperation, because the Soviets were convinced that non-military forms of cooperation sooner or later would acquire military implications. Soviet attitudes towards non-military forms of cooperation reflected

their evaluation of the military side of the matter, and will be included in the analysis.

Soviet attitudes in western and Soviet historiography

Western research into the history of Scandinavian and Nordic foreign policies of the interwar period has paid no or little attention to Soviet attitudes to the idea of Nordic cooperation in foreign, security and military affairs.¹³ Although results of the discussions were meagre in the military field at least, the exercise was nevertheless a prominent and permanent feature of Nordic foreign policy debates between the two world wars. Whereas Britain, France and Germany did not pay too much attention to these discussions, they were closely watched in Moscow.¹⁴ According to I.D. Kovalevskaia, a Soviet historian, the question of a "Nordic bloc" was one of three topics which were the principal sources of Soviet-Swedish disagreements in the 1930s. The others were the diverging attitudes towards the League of Nations (i.e. the discussions about the application of Art. 16 of the Covenant), and the Swedish-Finnish plans for a remilitarization of the Åland Islands in the late 1930s.¹⁵ There is, on the other hand, a more substantial body of research on the early post-war years. I have used this literature extensively in the part of the study dealing with the post-war period.¹⁶

As for the interwar period, references to the topic in *western* books and articles tend to treat it in a highly generalized manner. They characterize the Soviet attitude as one of disapproval, and suggest, moreover, that the Soviet stand was basically stable during the period under review. Nils Ørvik, in his otherwise highly valuable study of Norwegian security policy from 1920 to 1939, stated that "the Russians had always been opposed to the creation of a Nordic bloc", and that they opposed "all tendencies towards the creation of a military alliance in Scandinavia". The Soviets, Ørvik claimed, feared that a Nordic or Scandinavian bloc would come under German influence, and that the self-declared neutrality of the Scandinavian countries in the second half of the 1930s in and by itself made schemes of regional cooperation unattractive

from the Soviet perspective of "collective security".¹⁷ Egil Danielsen, in his book on Norwegian-Soviet relations 1917-1940, also suggests that Soviet opposition to Nordic military cooperation was of a permanent nature. The very existence of such an idea, in his opinion, constituted a strain on relations between the two countries.¹⁸ Standard general works on Scandinavian foreign policy in the interwar period hardly mention the topic, or fail to identify the evolution of the Soviet position.¹⁹

This holds true for scholarly works on narrower aspects of Nordic foreign policies in the interwar period as well. The general argument is that the Soviet Union opposed the formation of a Nordic bloc, without much further discussion. For instance, Max Jakobson refers to a traditional Russian opposition to the idea (specifically with regard to Finnish-Swedish military cooperation),²⁰ while L.A. Puntila, in a work on Finnish political history, asserts that both Germany and the Soviet Union were "suspicious" of Nordic military cooperation.²¹

Gustaf Mannerheim, as part of his critique of Finland's refusal to come to terms with the Soviet Union during the Finnish-Soviet negotiations of 1938-39, was one among the few who were able to notice the nuances in the Soviet position. In his memoirs he argues that the Soviet Union, under certain conditions, may have been prepared to accept extended military cooperation between the Nordic countries.²²

As far as *Soviet authors* are concerned, they are more nuanced in their discussion. It should be noted, however, that there is no extensive Soviet literature on the topic. Nordic cooperation is usually discussed within the context of Finnish policies. Until the advent of "new thinking" in Soviet foreign policy in the late 1980s and the ensuing revitalization of Soviet foreign policy studies, Soviet authors strongly condemned Finnish foreign policy in the interwar period, viewing Finland's "Scandinavian orientation" as camouflage for Finland's anti-

Soviet policies.²³ Soviet authors nevertheless indicate that the Soviet attitude to Nordic political and military cooperation was more complex than is apparent in the western works referred to above. E.M. Samoteikin, discussing Norwegian foreign policy in the interwar period, says that the idea of a defensive military bloc in the North was widely discussed in the period leading up to the Munich agreement of 1938. Such a "regional defensive organization" would primarily be directed against German aggression. The idea, according to Samoteikin, met "understanding and sympathy" in Moscow, but was opposed by social democrats in Norway and Denmark.²⁴ Aleksandr Kan, in his book on the modern history of Sweden, sees both the failure of the idea of Nordic military cooperation and the simultaneous rejection in Scandinavia of the Soviet-sponsored policy of "collective security" in the second half of the 1930s as symptomatic of the ill-considered foreign policies of the Scandinavian countries.²⁵ More recently a Soviet historian has argued that the Soviet Union sought "to connect the Scandinavian orientation in Finnish foreign policies [in the latter half of the 1930s] with the Soviet policy of isolating the potential aggressor - fascist Germany", i.e. encouraging Finnish participation in an anti-German Nordic cooperative venture. The attempt came to nothing, according to the author, largely due to Nordic, particularly Finnish, policies.²⁶ I.D. Kovalevskaia, in an article on Soviet-Swedish relations in the 1930s, implies that the Soviet Union at one point (1937-38) was prepared to "assist" (sodeistvovat) in the creation of a Scandinavian defence union (the attitude to Finland's place in the system is, as so often, not made explicit).²⁷

There is no work which explicitly discusses Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation during the Second World War. The *negative* Soviet stand, however, was made clear on a number of occasions, and there is hardly any need for more detailed studies.²⁸ Soviet policies towards Scandinavia during the war strictly reflected overall Soviet global policies.

The most detailed study of Soviet attitudes towards Nordic cooperation from the end of the war to the late 1950s is the work by Tom M. Hetland, which incorporated and largely confirmed the main findings of earlier works by other authors.²⁹ Moreover, by making extensive use of Norwegian archives and Soviet press materials, Hetland was able to identify and follow the evolution of the Soviet position in much more detail than the historians of the interwar period mentioned above. In his major study, Hetland discusses the evolution of the Soviet position from the early post-war years until 1958, and also presents a set of sensible interpretations of Soviet policies. He documents the negative Soviet stand towards Nordic cooperation after the war, but also discusses signs of a more relaxed Soviet attitudes in the 1950s. In the last part of the present study there are numerous references to Hetland's work.

This study is based on printed Soviet diplomatic correspondence and documents, on articles in Soviet, Comintern, and Scandinavian - mostly communist - newspapers and journals, and on documents in the archives of the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish Ministries of Foreign Affairs. In Moscow I have made a first search in the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation and in the former CPSU archives. Apart from the archives in Moscow, I have been able to consult those parts of the Comintern archives, mainly concerning Norwegian affairs, which are available on microform at the Archives of the Labour Movement in Oslo. I have also included some materials from the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and the Public Record Office in London.

Great visions, small results: Nordic discussions of military cooperation, 1918-1949

Small states' attempts to create schemes of extensive military cooperation tend to attract a measure of internal and external attention and concern that may seem out of proportion with the mostly meagre results that come out of the discussions. This was certainly so in the case of Nordic military cooperation in the period between the two World Wars and in the early post-war years. Although this idea was a constant feature of Nordic foreign and defence policy discussions in the 1920s and 1930s, during and after the war until 1948-49, it never came close to realization in any form. To Scandinavian policy makers, the increased military strength that would be derived from Nordic military cooperation was not sufficient to outweigh the fear that such cooperation itself would increase the importance of the region in the strategic calculations of the great powers and thus reduce rather than augment its security.

The only significant attempt at open military cooperation before the Second World War - the Swedish-Finnish plan for a joint remilitarization of the Åland Islands - came to nothing due to the Soviet veto in May 1939.³⁰ This notwithstanding, the prospects for the creation of some sort of military-political "bloc" of the Northern countries figured prominently in the Soviet press coverage of Northern affairs from the late 1920s onwards and in Soviet diplomacy towards the countries involved until the eve of the war. Although the Scandinavian discussions in 1948-49 were far more extensive than the short interlude in March 1940, the negotiations seemed doomed from the very beginning: the disparate foreign policy orientations of mainly Norway and Sweden all but excluded a Scandinavian solution. Despite these dire prospects for the evolution of Nordic political and military cooperation after the Second World War, it was among the major tasks of Soviet diplomats and propaganda in the Northern countries to counteract the idea.

The very existence of a Nordic debate about defence cooperation bred Soviet apprehension. Reading the Soviet press from the late 1920s without knowing the real situation in the Northern countries, one would get the impression that the "Nordic defence union" was close to realization. Before embarking on the discussion of Soviet views, some words should be said about the fate of Nordic military cooperation from the 1920s to the failure of the Scandinavian alternative in 1949.

Among the supporters of Nordic military cooperation it was generally accepted that Sweden would have to play the key role in a common defence arrangement, due to its geographical position as the "central" Scandinavian state and its superior military, industrial and demographic resources. From the point of view of the Swedish government, however, a Nordic military bloc was at no point a realistic option. Rickard Sandler, Swedish minister of foreign affairs during most of the 1930s, may have been personally sympathetic to the idea; at least he refused to reject it altogether. But Sandler's views were hardly representative of Per Albin Hansson's social-democratic government. Sweden, with its significant defence industry and comparatively strong military forces, was deeply attached to its traditional policy of neutrality and sought to maintain a position independent of great-power support. Sweden also tended to oppose any schemes which might disturb the existing balance of power in the Baltic area, and kept aloof from the affairs of its neighbours across the Baltic sea.

Norway opposed any talk of a military alliance with the other Nordic countries. To the Norwegians, the country's best defence was its geographical position on the periphery of Europe and British self-interest in upholding Norway's independence. The belief in the British "implicit guarantee" was deeply ingrained in the Norwegian foreign policy establishment, whatever the party affiliation of the foreign minister

at any given moment. Halvdan Koht, foreign minister from March 1935 until after the country's occupation by German forces in the spring of 1940, showed no interest in the idea. Being generally sceptical about the capacity of military power to safeguard the security of small countries, he favoured as a more reliable solution Norway's and the North's disengagement from European great power politics. Struggling to combine two set of foreign policy orientations, one highly idealist and the other strictly realist, he nevertheless envisaged himself in the role of a mediator between the antagonistic great powers in Europe. Having a strong belief in personal diplomacy and the mission of the small countries, Koht regarded military matters as being largely outside his purview.

During the 1930s Denmark became increasingly vulnerable to German pressure, and looked, just like Norway, to London for support. While hoping for British support, the Danish government felt compelled to come to terms with Germany. The Danes doubted that a system of Nordic military cooperation could do much to back up their own defence in the south. In March 1937 Denmark's social-democratic prime minister, Thorvald Stauning, unequivocally rejected the idea of a Nordic military bloc as a solution to Denmark's security problems.

The one Northern country which showed real interest in Nordic military cooperation was Finland. Like Denmark, but unlike Norway and Sweden until the late 1930s, Finland easily identified and visualized the probable source of a future threat to the country's security and integrity. The Finnish reaction, however, differed from Denmark's. While Denmark hoped that a policy of non-provocation and neutrality would keep the country out of a war, Finland actively looked for ways to supplement the country's own limited military resources and capabilities by way of political and military cooperation. Sweden was assigned a key role in the Finnish scheme, while Norway and particularly Denmark were less important. The idea of a Finnish-Swedish remilitarization of the Åland archipelago, which gradually came on the political agenda in

the two countries from the mid-1930s, was only the most ambitious among the Finnish attempts to initiate Nordic and Finnish-Swedish defence cooperation. The initiative was clearly on the Finnish side, and it turned out that Sweden was unwilling to pursue the plans in face of Soviet opposition. Apart from the Åland question, there were also discussions about Swedish deliveries of military equipment to Finland and help in the development of Finnish defence industry. Finland wanted some kind of agreement that would guarantee Swedish weapons supplies even in times of war, but no formal agreement on this was ever reached.³¹

The Soviet-German relationship went from bad to worse after the outbreak of the civil war in Spain in the summer of 1936, and in the Scandinavian countries and in the West it was widely assumed that in case of a war between Germany and the Soviet Union, both states might seek to acquire bases or strategic territories in the Northern countries. In this situation the Scandinavian and foreign press again discussed whether the Nordic countries would respond by creating some form of military alliance. Halvdan Koht, on the eve of the foreign ministers' conference in Helsinki in April 1937, repudiated the rumours as baseless.³² Similar declarations came from the Swedish and the Danish foreign ministers.

The Nordic countries succeeded, however, in establishing a degree of cooperation in matters of foreign affairs, especially with regard to their policy towards the League of Nations and in defining common rules of neutrality in times of war. Cooperation in this field reached back to the years of the First World War, when Sweden, Norway and Denmark to a certain degree succeeded in coordinating their economic policies and their policies towards the belligerent great powers. The cooperation was renewed in the 1920s, and from the mid-1930s Scandinavian foreign policy cooperation became Nordic, as it was gradually extended to include Finland.

In the Northern countries, the Second World War struck a heavy blow both to the idea of traditional neutrality and to the prospects for Nordic cooperation. When the war ended, Finland, before the war the strongest supporter of Nordic political and military cooperation, was no longer in a position to freely pursue its pre-war policies towards its Scandinavian neighbours. Limited functional defence cooperation between Norway and Sweden, which began during the war when the Norwegians were allowed to set up military training camps on Swedish territory, continued after the war. Attempts in 1947 to develop forms of bilateral and trilateral technical defence cooperation in Scandinavia led to only small results.³³

Only with the onset of the cold war did Sweden, Norway and Denmark once more start seriously to discuss forms of defence cooperation or alliance. Discussions in 1948-49 in the three countries centered on two solutions - a Scandinavian and an Atlantic (i.e. adherence to the North Atlantic Treaty). The Swedes were bent on preserving their non-aligned status and therefore argued the case for a Scandinavian military union without undue ties to any of the two emerging political-military blocs. When these talks failed, Sweden remained non-aligned while Norway and Denmark joined the Atlantic Pact. Finland was never brought into the discussions.

The formation of Soviet attitudes: 1918-1934

The period from the October revolution until the early 1930s constitutes the formative period of Soviet foreign policies, when basic attitudes, Soviet foreign policy aims and strategies evolved. There were two lines of Soviet policies and attitudes towards Nordic political and military cooperation in the 1920s and early 1930s: one basically negative, the other much more positive. This ambiguity reflected two sets of approaches or traditions within the Soviet foreign policy establishment. The negative, ideologized attitude to Nordic cooperation stemmed from what I have called the "bolshevik idiosyncratic" interpretation of international politics. The other, more positive attitude, reflected a "realpolitik" tradition within the Soviet foreign policy establishment.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Russia the three Scandinavian states for a short period came to occupy a position of prominence in Soviet foreign policy quite out of proportion to their small size and limited influence in world politics. This was due partly to their importance as major trading partners for Russia until the Soviet government succeeded in establishing relations with the great powers in the early 1920s, partly to their role as "windows" or "bridges" between the isolated revolutionary regime in Moscow and the rest of the western world.³⁴ However, the Scandinavian states were soon relegated to their more typical position on the periphery of Soviet foreign policy interest. Soviet interest in the Scandinavian states as such being restricted, Soviet attention to the airy discussions about Scandinavian or Nordic cooperation was even more so. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that until the late 1920s there were few allusions to Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation in the Soviet press. The 1920s are also the period when the two Soviet approaches, the basically negative *bolshevik idiosyncratic* and the positive *realpolitik*, coexisted, although the negative attitude to Nordic regional cooperation dominated Soviet propaganda.

Negative Soviet attitudes in the 1920s: the Baltic connection

Treating Scandinavia as an area of limited direct interest to the Soviet Union, the Soviet government was much more concerned with developments in the Baltic area, including Finland and Swedish policies towards the Baltic states. The Soviets were therefore acutely sensitive to anything that might be interpreted as signs of closer cooperation between Sweden and Scandinavia on the one hand, and some combination of Finland and the three Baltic states and Poland on the other.³⁵ The Soviets were convinced (partly rightly so) that the British and the French encouraged the creation of Baltic-Scandinavian groupings as one element in their anti-Soviet policies.³⁶

As a result, mutual visits by leading politicians and other contacts across the Baltic Sea repeatedly evoked expressions of Soviet concern. When the Estonian foreign minister visited Sweden in the autumn 1928, V.L. Kopp, at that time the Soviet envoy to Stockholm, wrote to Moscow that this was "far more" than a courtesy visit. According to Kopp, the visit was symptomatic of the desire among the three Baltic states to create a Baltic entente without Poland's participation. The implications for the Soviet Union were therefore unclear. Kopp pointed out that Sweden's Baltic policies were less anti-Soviet than Poland's. At the same time the Soviet envoy saw signs of a growing Swedish "activism" in the Baltic region. Sweden's Baltic policy should therefore be closely watched.³⁷

At approximately the same time as Kopp made his comments, the Soviet press published a number of articles warning against French and British plans to create an anti-Soviet Scandinavian-Baltic "bloc". In a speech to the Central Executive Committee³⁸ in December 1929 Maxim Litvinov, the deputy Commissar, warned that "certain Swedish circles" entertained imperialistic designs towards the East. Kopp, on the other hand, had made it clear that such tendencies were not part of the official Swedish foreign policy.³⁹ In a report summing up

developments in Swedish foreign policy during 1929, Kopp continued his analysis along these more sober lines. Sweden, according to Kopp, was clearly reorienting herself from Germany towards Britain and France. Poland's Scandinavian aspirations, which the Soviets violently opposed, found no support in Sweden. Kopp made no mention of Swedish activism in the Baltic region.

Gradually, however, the Soviets started to show signs of worry about alleged plans to create a system of intensified cooperation between the Northern countries. A series of alarmist articles in the Soviet press culminated for the time being with an authoritative comment in *Izvestiia* in August 1929 about the "Northern entente".⁴⁰ The article alluded to an older plan, which, however, only recently had materialized as an "anti-Soviet Baltic-Scandinavian bloc" of a military character inspired by Britain. The Soviets were still primarily concerned by the Baltic connection: the author of the article argued that efforts to create this "bloc" had its origin and main support in the Baltic states, Finland and Poland. But also the "increasing imperialist tendencies of the Swedish bourgeoisie" implied support for a Nordic bloc. The author implied that "The Northern entente" was already a reality and constituted a threat to the Soviet Union.⁴¹ In the following years articles of similar content continued to appear in the Soviet press. In March 1932, for instance, *Krasnaia Gazeta* (a Leningrad newspaper) reiterated the warnings against the creation of some sort of "Pan-Balticum" or "Northern Entente", which by their very nature would be anti-Soviet.⁴²

These and similar Soviet signals defined the predominant Soviet position for the following years. The articles in the Soviet press were no doubt intended as a warning against the creation of any system of military cooperation between the Nordic countries. Specifically, the Soviet Union made clear its opposition to the extension of contacts between the Scandinavian states, Finland and the Baltic states. It should be noted that Soviet policies towards Scandinavia already at

this stage, i.e. before the spectre of Soviet-German war arose after Hitler's accession to power, was closely related to the state of Soviet-Finnish relations and Soviet policy towards Finland. The Soviets were probably aware of the fact that no plans existed for any Nordic or Scandinavian-Baltic political or military "bloc", and their signalling was primarily preventive in nature. To be sure, Litvinov told the Norwegian minister in Moscow that he did not treat the allegations about the "Northern entente" too seriously.⁴³

Summing up: until the early 1930s Soviet attitudes towards Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation operated largely within the broader context of Soviet policies towards the Baltic area. In the last years of the period, however, the Soviets started to signal their opposition to any schemes of Nordic cooperation, even without the Baltic connection. Throughout, Soviet propaganda saw cooperation in Northern Europe against the backdrop of alleged hostile intentions of the western great powers, primarily Britain.

The positive stand: the views of Georgii V. Chicherin

Apart from the dominant trend, which tended to oppose all forms of Nordic and Baltic cooperation, there was an alternative, *realpolitik*, interpretation within the Soviet foreign policy establishment.

An alternative, generally positive, attitude to small-state cooperation in general and Nordic cooperation in particular was formulated in the mid-1920s by Georgii V. Chicherin, commissar for foreign affairs from 1918 to 1930. Pragmatically analyzing the role of small states in international politics, Chicherin recognized the potential advantages for Soviet security of Nordic political and military cooperation. His basic argument was that only through cooperation could the Northern countries make up a credible "buffer" between the Soviet Union and the hostile Western great powers.

One should bear in mind, however, that Chicherin, especially after Lenin's death in 1924, had limited access to the inner circle of top-level decision-makers and that he was mostly isolated from the rest of the Soviet leadership.⁴⁴ For reasons of health Chicherin was also often absent from Moscow for periods up to several months, during which the leadership of the Commissariat was in the hands of his deputy Maksim Litvinov, who during the last years of Chicherin's tenure took over the actual control over the Commissariat. This double leadership of the Commissariat most certainly contributed to the ambiguity of Soviet policies in this and other matters.

In a series of talks with the Danish minister in Moscow in the mid 1920s Georgii Chicherin presented views about the role of the smaller states in European politics in general and Scandinavian cooperation in particular which were strikingly at variance with the negative attitude towards small-state cooperation which dominated Soviet official thinking as presented above. While Chicherin made similar but apparently less frequent mention of the topic in his conversations with the Swedish envoy, there are no references to it in the archives of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁵ According to the Danish envoy, Chicherin repeatedly returned to what the Dane dubbed Chicherin's "favourite thought": the need to create a Scandinavian or Nordic defence union. An alliance between the Scandinavian states, Chicherin argued, would be sufficiently strong to be taken seriously by the great powers. He deplored that the close Scandinavian cooperation which had developed during the First World War had faded when hostilities ended.⁴⁶

Chicherin's support for Scandinavian cooperation was part of his general thinking about the role of smaller states in European politics. The smaller states, he argued, should strengthen their cooperation. He also pointed specifically to the possibility of some cooperative ventures between Scandinavia and the smaller states of "Central Europe". Although it

is hard to establish the exact meaning of Chicherin's words - the Danish minister, unfortunately, was not very precise in his reports - one is tempted to conclude that what Chicherin had in mind was some sort of closer cooperation between Scandinavia and the Baltic states. By cooperating, Chicherin argued, Europe's smaller states could play a useful role as strong buffers between the Soviet Union and the hostile Western great powers.⁴⁷

Other elements of Chicherin's conversations with the Danish envoy reveal the strategic thinking and "realpolitik" rationale of his remarks. He related the arguments in favour of Scandinavian and small-state cooperation directly to a critique of the Danish policy of unilateral disarmament. Small-state cooperation, he argued, only had sense if the smaller states were sufficiently armed and thus in a position to resist great power aggression by force of arms. Only then would the smaller powers be allowed to conduct their own independent foreign policy.⁴⁸ Without a strong military establishment, the smaller states would lose all international influence.

Chicherin pointed out that the Danish conservatives, who argued against the government's disarmament programme, had a better grasp of the political reality than the liberals and the leftist parties, whom he unkindly dubbed "defence nihilist". Even limited military forces, Chicherin argued, would make a difference in a great power conflict, when the main antagonists would be hardly pressed to use the available forces on the main battlefronts.⁴⁹

Apart from his general reasoning about the role of small states in a world dominated by great powers, Chicherin's "campaign" for Danish rearmament and the creation of a Scandinavian military bloc was closely related to his concern with the use of and control over the entrances to the Baltic, the Sound and the Danish Belts. His main preoccupation was the possibility of a British intervention or invasion against the Soviet Union in the Baltic area. Chicherin wanted the Danish government to

commit itself to some sort of closing of the Belts in case of war in the Baltic area. Denmark, Chicherin argued, had the "key to the Baltic Sea". He made a point of drawing parallels to the First World War, when Denmark had mined the Belts, thereby blocking allied help to Russia. He told the Danish minister that the Soviet government hoped that Denmark would use its capacity to close the Belts also in a situation when this would benefit Russia.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he stressed that Denmark's ability to block the entrances to the Baltic would be undermined by its policy of disarmament. Finally, Chicherin argued that if Denmark disarmed, the British would not hesitate to establish a "Malta in the Baltic" on one of the Danish islands.⁵¹

Thus, Chicherin's "realpolitik" approach to matters of Nordic and small-state cooperation led him to conclusions which directly contradicted what was in the process of being formulated as the dominant Soviet attitude. Being able to differentiate between the policies of capitalist countries, Chicherin felt that the smaller states in Europe, through cooperation, coordination and pooling of their resources, could constitute a third element, a "buffer", between the Soviet Union and the hostile western great powers, thereby giving the Soviet Union additional security against an attack by the Western great powers.

It seems also clear that Chicherin's views on Danish defence policies were partly at odds with that of his colleagues in the Commissariat, including his deputy Litvinov.⁵² In a letter to Litvinov from November 1929, i.e. only two years after Chicherin criticized the Danish disarmament programme, the Soviet minister to Copenhagen ridiculed the arguments used by the opponents of complete Danish disarmament. Putting Chicherin's reasoning on its head, Kobetskii concluded that the only rationale of Danish military forces would be to create an excuse for the British to take control over the Baltic entrances.⁵³

On the other hand, Chicherin was not isolated in his concern about the importance of the Baltic entrances to the Soviet Union's security. His attempts to influence the Danish towards committing themselves to closing the Belts in times of war, were paralleled by repeated Soviet expressions of concern over Danish and Swedish plans to deepen the shallow entrances to the Baltic Sea through the Sound. The Russians argued that Danish and Swedish plans for the deepening of Flinte-renderen and Drogden (the main passages in the Sound) were inspired by London and designed to open the passages to the Baltic for even the largest (British) warships. In a letter to the Soviet minister to Copenhagen Chicherin characterized as "ridiculous" Danish and Swedish assurances that there were no military considerations involved in the plans whatsoever.⁵⁴

The Soviet government made at least one weak formal attempt in the interwar period to get international sanction to a closing of the Baltic Sea to warships of non-littoral states. During the Rome conference on naval disarmament in February 1924 the Russian delegate demanded "as a preliminary step to all discussions of naval disarmament by Russia that the Black and Baltic Seas should be made inaccessible to the warships of all powers except those of the littoral states."⁵⁵ The idea of a "neutralization" of the Baltic Sea, which figured in discussions between Finland, the three Baltic States, Poland and Britain in the first tumultuous years following the First World War, was of a different origin. In this version, the primary aim of the "neutralization" was to reduce the power of the Russian Baltic Fleet. However, some of the proponents of a "neutralization" of the Baltic, among them J.H. Vennola, prime minister of Finland from spring 1921, linked "neutralization" to the closing of the Baltic Sea to warships of non-littoral states. In the Finnish-Russian peace agreement of October 14, 1920, the two parties pledged (art. 12) "to support the idea of the neutralization of the Gulf of Finland and the whole of the Baltic Sea" and to work towards the realization of this idea. In his speech at the Lausanne conference on 19 December 1922 Chicherin argued that the Soviet government during the

peace negotiations with the Baltic states had proposed the neutralization of the Baltic Sea on the condition that it would be guaranteed by the other great powers and not cross vital Russian state interests.⁵⁶

Concerns about the control over the Baltic entrances in case of war continued to figure prominently in Soviet policy towards Denmark. It played a certain, although less prominent role, in Soviet-Swedish relations. In the early 1930s the Soviets apparently felt that the British were strengthening their influence in Scandinavia and their control over the entrances to the Baltic. The Soviets suspected that Denmark had undertaken secret commitments towards Britain and France regarding the control over the straits in times of war, directed against the Soviet Union. The matter of who would effectively control the Baltic entrances was probably the main factor in Soviet evaluations of Danish military policies in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁵⁷

However, Chicherin's views on Scandinavian and Nordic cooperation and small-state collaboration in general were clearly at variance with the predominant Soviet position as it could be gauged from public declarations and press comments. It was common knowledge that attempts at small-state combinations in the Soviet Union's neighbourhood were met with official suspicion in Moscow. The Soviet Union, moreover, prepared the ground for Soviet bilateral pacts or agreements which each of the neighbouring states as an alternative to bilateral or multilateral schemes without Soviet participation.⁵⁸

Beginning in the mid 1920s, the Soviet envoys to the Scandinavian capitals conducted irregular talks with the three countries' ministries of foreign affairs about the initiation of bilateral agreements or pacts of non-aggression and the peaceful solution of conflicts. Nothing, however, came out of these talks, basically because the Soviet were interested in pacts of non-aggression, while the Scandinavians primarily

envisaged agreements about procedures for conciliation and arbitration. The matter was put to rest for the remainder of the interwar period after Johan Ludvig Mowinckel, the Norwegian minister of foreign affairs, unsuccessfully raised the matter during the Nordic foreign ministers' meeting in Stockholm in September 1934. The limited Soviet interest in reaching an agreement with the Scandinavian countries - the talks were not raised to the level of formal negotiations - made it once more clear that Scandinavia after all was less involved in Soviet security interests than the Baltic region.⁵⁹

1934-35: The Soviet campaign against Nordic cooperation

Scandinavian foreign policies and Scandinavian or Nordic cooperation seldom figured prominently in Soviet foreign policy statements and propaganda in the 1920s and early 1930s. Discussions of Nordic topics were mostly reflecting Soviet concerns about developments in the Baltic region. However, this situation gradually changed after Hitler's accession to power in 1933 and the ensuing rise of tension in Europe: from that time Scandinavia once more occupied a position of its own in Soviet foreign policy and strategic calculations.

The renewed Soviet interest in Scandinavian foreign and security policies culminated for the time being in the autumn of 1934, when the Soviets launched a campaign in the Soviet press and through diplomatic channels against alleged plans to create a military-political "bloc" of the three Scandinavian countries and Finland. This time the Soviets viewed the spectre of Nordic cooperation as one element in German aggressive plans. Evaluations of Finland's position played a key role in Soviet deliberations.

The campaign, which started in the autumn of 1934 and reverberated into 1935, was symptomatic of the process of

reorientation which was going on in the Soviet foreign policy establishment. Even against the backdrop of the emerging German threat, the Soviet leadership was unable to detect the fundamental division which existed within the capitalist world and adjust their policies accordingly. At most the spectre of Nordic cooperation was therefore linked to the actual threat, i.e. fascist Germany, although Soviet propaganda was still unable to free itself from the traditional idea of England as the main threat in Northern Europe. For good measure, therefore, plans for Northern cooperation were often seen as expressions of German *and* British designs. Only the recognition of the existence of common interests between the Soviet Union and the non-fascists capitalist world, as expressed in the Soviet-French pact of May 2, 1935, paved the ground for Soviet support for small-state regional systems as potential bastions of stability and security in Europe. More than two years passed from Hitler's accession to power in January 1933 to the final victory of "collective security" and "popular fronts" in the summer of 1935. Until this, the ideologized "bolshevik" interpretation continued to dominate Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation.

The Soviet campaign was an expression of the basic assumption that any change of the strategic *status quo* in Northern Europe would benefit the aggressive powers, mainly Germany. Soviet concerns were heightened by developments in the Northern countries themselves, where the idea of Northern cooperation, and specifically the idea of Nordic defence cooperation, gradually was broadening its appeal. More than anything else the Soviets were concerned about the repercussions of the gradual inclusion of Finland into what had until now been "Scandinavian" rather than "Nordic" cooperation.

In October and November 1934 the Soviet foreign language publications *Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung* and *Le Journal de Moscou* published a number of articles attacking the foreign policies of the Scandinavian countries and Finland. The press

campaign culminated with an article in *Pravda* on 17 November under the title "The Scandinavian military bloc".

Pravda argued that the Stockholm conference of the Nordic foreign ministers in September 1934, where the Finnish foreign minister participated for the first time,⁶⁰ had led to the formation of a "political bloc" of the four Nordic countries and had stimulated Scandinavian and Finnish "militarism". Discussions in the Scandinavian press made it clear, according to *Pravda*, that even military cooperation between the four countries was now on the political agenda. The article referred specifically to a commentary in the Swedish *Stockholms Tidningen* and an article in the Norwegian journal *Janus*. The *Janus* article in particular, it was argued, made it clear that the ideas of Nordic military cooperation were primarily directed against the Soviet Union, mainly serving Germany's interests. German newspapers had discussed the question of a remilitarization of the Åland Islands and building of fortifications along the Sound, and had signalled German interest in Scandinavian military cooperation. Germany, according to *Pravda*, actually aimed at making the Baltic Sea "a German lake", utilizing the Nordic countries as a *place d'armes* for its aggressive purposes.

Finland was the primary target of the Soviet attacks. The articles pointed to the close links existing between Finnish and German military circles. Finland was characterized as the "link" between the "Scandinavian bloc" and "fascist Germany", and was allegedly increasing its influence over the foreign policies of the three Scandinavian countries.⁶¹

The press campaign in the autumn 1934 was paralleled by Soviet diplomatic efforts. In late October Harald Fallenius, first secretary at the Swedish legation in Moscow, was told in the NKID that Sweden was coming under Finnish influence, which had led to the appearance of an anti-Soviet front of the two countries. The NKID pointed to the four Nordic countries' refusal to sign the letter inviting the Soviet Union to become

a member of the League of Nations,⁶² and also referred to Swedish press discussions and the attitude of authoritative Swedish military circles. Boris Shtein and Aleksandra Kollontai, the Soviet ministers in Finland and Sweden, made similar statements to Swedish diplomats in Helsinki and Stockholm respectively, stressing that Moscow was concerned by an alleged increased Finnish influence on the Scandinavian countries' foreign policy orientation.⁶³ The Norwegian minister in Moscow, Andreas T. Urbye, who unsuccessfully tried to convince the Soviets that any talk of a Nordic military bloc was far off the mark, got the impression that they "viewed the matter more seriously than I thought possible". He was told that the Soviet Union had observed "a changed attitude toward the Soviet Union" of the Scandinavian governments after the foreign ministers' conference in Stockholm. Once more the Soviets pointed to the failure of the Nordic countries to sign the letter inviting the Soviet Union to become a member of the League of Nations.⁶⁴

Ivan Maiski, Soviet ambassador to London, alluded to the existence among the Nordic countries of "some kind of political understanding directed against the Soviet Union", and dismayed the Norwegian minister in London by speaking about a "military alliance".⁶⁵ The Danish minister in Moscow was told that the very existence in Denmark of a press discussion of "a military alliance of the four countries directed against the USSR" cast a shadow on the relationship between Copenhagen and Moscow.⁶⁶ Both the press campaign and the diplomatic efforts abated towards the end of the year.

Scandinavian and Finnish discussions of defence cooperation were closely related to disputes over the size of the defence budgets in the four countries. Not surprisingly, the Soviets warned against any increase in Scandinavian or Finnish defence allocations. Even after the campaign against the alleged Nordic military "bloc" had culminated, the Soviets continued to view agitation in the Nordic countries for

increased defence spending as a right-wing "militaristic", "nationalistic" and anti-Soviet course of action.⁶⁷

At this point the Soviet government gave unreserved support to the neutralist elements in the Scandinavian countries. In 1933 the Soviet minister to Oslo argued in a letter to the NKID that the Soviet Union should do what it could to help Norway remain neutral in case of war. For this reason the Soviet Union should avoid everything that might lead to frictions between the two countries.⁶⁸

The Soviet concern about the prospect of intensified Nordic cooperation was also mirrored in the Scandinavian communist press. For instance, an article in early 1935 in the Danish *Kommunistisk tidsskrift* reiterated the arguments from the Soviet press campaign. Under the heading "The Scandinavian Bloc" it attacked the proponents of Scandinavian rearmament, and also the idea of Scandinavian military cooperation. The author was particularly worried by alleged plans for a joint Swedish-Danish fortification along the Sound. A closing of the Baltic entrances in times of war, it was argued, would give Germany a free hand to pursue its anti-Soviet aims in the Baltic. This argument, which contradicted the earlier Soviet attempts to achieve a closing of the straits to warships of non-littoral states, clearly reflected the turn in Soviet thinking towards viewing Germany rather than England as the primary threat to Soviet security. The article concluded that the Nordic foreign ministers had discussed issues of military cooperation during their meeting in September.⁶⁹

An examination of the Norwegian communist daily *Arbeideren* for the years 1934-39 reveals the close identity of views and arguments between the Soviets and their followers in Norway.⁷⁰ During 1934 and 1935 *Arbeideren* vigorously opposed all plans for increased Norwegian defence efforts. Swedish and Norwegian social democrats were attacked for their alleged re-orientation towards accepting increased allocations for military

defence. The anti-military stand of the Norwegian Communist Party was confirmed at the party's 5th Congress in 1936.

The rejection of Scandinavian re-armament was accompanied by attacks on the idea of Scandinavian or Nordic cooperation. Echoing the Soviet press, *Arbeideren* argued that the foreign ministers' conference in September 1934 had approved a number of measures with the aim of supporting Germany in a war with the Soviet Union. The newspaper concluded that "the existence of a Nordic bloc directed against the Soviet Union is becoming ever more evident",⁷¹ and demanded that the Norwegian government "stop Norway's participation in the Nordic anti-Soviet bloc".⁷² Although the signing of the Soviet-French mutual assistance pact on 2 May 1935, which contained an explicit Soviet endorsement of French defence efforts, apparently created some confusion among Norwegian communists,⁷³ they did not yet abandon their negative attitude towards Scandinavian defence efforts.

Needless to say, the position of *Arbeideren* and the Scandinavian communist press resulted from decisions of the highest decision-making bodies of the communist parties. In early March 1935 the politburo of the Norwegian Communist Party (NKP) passed a resolution condemning Norway's participation in the preparations for a new "imperialistic war" and a "Scandinavian aggressive bloc" ("den skandinaviske krigsblokk") headed by Sweden. This "bloc" was directed against the Soviet Union and inspired by Germany and (sic) Britain. The politburo condemned Scandinavian rearmament, and made it clear that it would be a priority task of the Party to "unmask" Norway's participation in the anti-Soviet Scandinavian "bloc". As an example of the aggressive intentions of the Nordic countries, the resolution claimed that the Nordic foreign ministers had discussed plans for developing the Åland Islands into a "base for the submarine war against the Soviet Union".⁷⁴

The Soviet campaign, through diplomatic channels and in the Soviet and communist press, was obviously an orchestrated one intended to influence Scandinavian and Finnish policies. The correspondence between Moscow and the Soviet legations in the four Nordic capitals in the autumn of 1934 reveals more of the Soviet motivation. In late September Boris S. Stomoniakov, deputy commissar for foreign affairs in charge of relations with the Nordic countries, argued in a letter to madame Kollontai that the creation of a Nordic bloc led by Sweden but including Finland would be contrary to Soviet interests. A Nordic bloc's policy towards the Soviet Union would undoubtedly be strongly influenced by Finland. More clearly than the three Scandinavian countries, Finland had a strong, albeit hostile interest in relations with the Soviet Union. The basically passive attitude of Denmark and Norway, together with a lack of will on behalf of Sweden to oppose anti-Soviet intrigues, would leave the field open to the Finns.⁷⁵ Litvinov presented similar arguments a fortnight later. Besides Japan, Germany, and Poland, he argued, Finland was "the most aggressive country". If Sweden were to move closer to Finland it would "consciously or unconsciously be drawn into anti-Soviet machinations". If, on the other hand, Finland behaved "loyally" and "peacefully" the prospects of Nordic cooperation would be less alarming. Litvinov also referred to the League of Nations affair to prove his point.⁷⁶ A couple of days later Stomoniakov once again argued that recent developments had demonstrated that the policy towards the Soviet Union of a Nordic "bloc" by and large would be dominated by Finland.⁷⁷

Thus the Soviets at this point clearly viewed Nordic political and military cooperation as being contrary to Soviet interests. The primary reason for Soviet opposition was the danger of increased German and Finnish influence in Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries. Echoing the ingrained fear of British intrigues, and reflecting the Soviet tendency to treat the whole capitalist world as one hostile bloc, it was also argued that "certain anti-Soviet circles" in Britain viewed a Nordic

"bloc" as a an ally in a possible future war with the Soviet Union.⁷⁸ Soviet opposition to Nordic cooperation was linked to a rejection of Nordic rearmament, and went together with support for the neutralist elements in the Nordic countries.

The Soviet ministers in Copenhagen and Stockholm were correspondingly instructed to argue against the formation of a Nordic military bloc when the idea was discussed. Stomoniakov also noted with satisfaction that the Soviet press campaign went far from unnoticed in Scandinavia. It had "reinforced the neutralist elements vis-a-vis the activist elements" in the three countries. The Soviet Union should not, according to Stomoniakov, remain passive with regard to the agitation for a Nordic bloc. It should actively work against the movement for Nordic military cooperation, and the Scandinavian countries should be encouraged to continue their policy of "peace and neutrality".⁷⁹

However, although the "bolshevik" ideologized approach clearly predominated in Soviet policy and propaganda with regard to Nordic cooperation, there were traces of Chicherin's "realpolitik" legacy among Soviet diplomats and the *narkomindeltsy* in Moscow. Boris Shtein in Helsinki sent the most alarmist reports, while Kollontai in Stockholm and Bekzadian in Oslo were closer to reality in the evaluation of the evolution of Nordic cooperation. Kollontai told the Swedish foreign minister that she did not herself want to bring up the topic, because she did not believe in the existence of a Scandinavian anti-Soviet policy. In conversations with Swedish officials she also agreed with the Swedish argument that Finland's Scandinavian orientation was in Soviet interest.⁸⁰ Even Boris Stomoniakov, the deputy Commissar in charge of Nordic affairs, agreed during a private conversations that the Soviet Union should welcome Finland's coming closer to the three Scandinavian countries.⁸¹ Beresov, Stomoniakov's successor as head of the Northern-Baltic-Polish department, was apparently more stubborn in his hostility and suspicion towards Finland.⁸²

1935-39: the return of the "realpolitik" approach

The consolidation of nazism in Germany and the ensuing rise of a major threat to Soviet security in the heart of continental Europe triggered a fundamental reevaluation of Soviet foreign policy. After 1934-35, the policy of "collective security" and "popular fronts" altered the Soviet Union's relationship to the non-fascist capitalist world. On the periphery of great-power politics, the reevaluation included Soviet attitudes towards Nordic cooperation, rearmament and neutrality. The new Soviet approach echoed Chicherin's "realpolitik" attitude to the role of the Northern countries in international politics. The idea of the North as a strategic "buffer" reappeared in Soviet thinking. Also regional factors, in particular Soviet evaluations of Finnish internal and external politics, still played a key role for the evolution of Soviet views. Towards the end of the period the Soviets lost interest in the idea of Nordic political and military cooperation, having realized that closer forms of Nordic defence cooperation would not materialize in the foreseeable future.

1935-36: Soviet policies in transition

Until Hitler's accession to power in Germany, Soviet coverage of Nordic affairs had portrayed Great Britain as the most aggressive anti-Soviet great power with its own designs in Northern Europe. This traditional attitude was still reflected in the Soviet campaign against Nordic cooperation in 1934-35. After the consolidation of Hitler's regime, however, the focus shifted unequivocally to Germany: thereafter Soviet propaganda concentrated on the unmasking of German activity and plans in the region. On the general level, the Soviet-French pact of May 1935 symbolized this change in the Soviet foreign policy orientation.

In 1935 and 1936, after the campaign against Northern cooperation abated in early 1935, articles regularly appeared in the Soviet press which attacked the foreign and military policies of Finland and the Scandinavian countries. There was less talk, however, of the Nordic "bloc", attention being focused on alleged German plans to use Scandinavia and Finland as a springboard for aggression towards the East. Finland was described as a virtual German ally, and the Soviets condemned the idea of military cooperation between Sweden and Finland. Such cooperation would be to the benefit of Germany. Initially the Soviets also maintained their negative attitude towards increased defence efforts in the four Nordic countries.⁸³

This replacement of Great Britain with Germany as the Soviet Union's main opponent in Northern Europe did not necessarily mean that Soviet attitudes towards Nordic cooperation as such had changed. In fact, that was a much more gradual process: the initial Soviet reaction was to assign to Germany the evil ambitions which had previously been assigned to England. Only slowly did the new political and strategic landscape in Europe lead to a Soviet reappraisal of the role of the Northern countries as a power factor of its own in international politics.

This did not mean, however, that the Soviet approach to the Nordic countries and the rest of Europe's smaller states remained fixed. One major change followed directly from the evolving doctrine of "collective security", the essence of which was the construction of security arrangements directed against German aggression, and the new Soviet enthusiasm for the principles embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations, not least the option of applying sanctions against an aggressor. In 1934 the Soviet Union had encouraged the three Scandinavian countries to continue their policy of "peace" and "neutrality", openly supporting the neutralist elements in these countries' political establishments. Now the Soviet attitude with regard to Scandinavian and small-state neutrality changed. One of the articles alluded to above argued that "a neutral

armed Scandinavia" would be welcomed in Germany.⁸⁴ Soon the Soviets became more explicit: Scandinavian neutrality was to the advantage of Germany, while Berlin counted on direct Finnish support in their aggressive schemes.⁸⁵ It soon became standard Soviet foreign policy to condemn small-state neutrality as working against the principles of "collective security".⁸⁶

From a Soviet perspective, neutrality presented the Scandinavian countries with a particular dilemma. As Tikhmenev, the Soviet minister in Copenhagen pointed out in mid-1936, the Scandinavian countries would be too weak to defend their neutrality without support from one of the great powers even if they made serious efforts to strengthen their military defence. That is, they would have to choose side, at the same time virtually abandoning their "neutrality".⁸⁷ In other words, the idea of small-state neutrality was an illusion in a world dominated by the power politics of the great powers. The persistent Soviet attacks on the neutralist policies of the Scandinavian countries, which often bordered at ridicule, was based on this insight.

It was only logical, therefore, that the Soviets gradually started to reevaluate their positions also with regard to Nordic political and military cooperation.

The reasoning inherent in the emerging Soviet position was visualized by an article in *Moscow Daily News*, a newspaper aiming primarily at a foreign audience, in September 1935. The author took as his point of departure the Nordic foreign ministers' meeting which had shortly before been held in Oslo. The article was a rare example of a Soviet press commentary held in a sober voice, without strong evaluations and the customary vicious attacks on the foreign policies of the Nordic countries. The author pointed to the limited size of the armed forces of the four Nordic countries (i.e. also Finland!), even when counted together. Echoing Chicherin's argument exactly one decade earlier, he argued that even such forces would nevertheless make a difference if they supported the same side

in a great power war. The author also noted that the Scandinavians had refused to develop too close contacts with Germany and Poland, and that Germany's aggressive posture had forced the Scandinavians to pay more attention to their armed forces. An example of this was increases in the Swedish defence budget, and emerging discussions in Sweden about a fortification of the Åland Islands. The author concluded that the Nordic foreign ministers at the conference in Oslo had expressed the will of the participating states to coordinate their foreign policies.⁸⁸

The Danish envoy read the article as a sign of an ongoing Soviet reevaluation of Nordic cooperation and of Finland's role in it. He even spoke about "the new attitude to Scandinavian cooperation".⁸⁹ The Danish minister had good reason for paying attention to the article. Apart from its cautious but still unmistakably positive attitude to the general idea of Nordic cooperation, it was clearly more positive to Finland's role than what was still the customary Soviet position at the time.⁹⁰ It is also interesting for its, although only implicit, endorsement of Scandinavian *and* Finnish rearmament. In view of later developments, it should be noted that there is no explicit disapproval of the alleged Swedish discussions about a fortification of the Åland Islands.

Summing up: the changed international situation after the emergence of a threatening fascist Germany challenged the negative attitude to Nordic and small-power cooperation which had been an inherent part of Soviet foreign policy since its early days. Having been subdued since Litvinov effectively took over power in the Commissariat in the late 1920s, Georgii Chicherin's "realist" approach to small-power cooperation gradually replaced the "bolshevik" tradition in Soviet policies towards the Scandinavian states and Finland.

1937-38: consolidation of Soviet realism

1937 saw the definitive breakthrough of the new Soviet attitude towards Scandinavia and Finland in general and Nordic cooperation in particular. During 1937 the central Soviet newspapers published a series of articles depicting German aggressive designs in Scandinavia. Soviet attention was increasingly focused on Northern Europe's strategic importance, not least Norway's Atlantic coast line and the Baltic straits. The Soviet press also discussed the region's role as a supplier of important raw materials and services. For instance, articles in *Pravda* and *Krasnaia Zvezda* from April and August 1937 discussed the strategic importance for Germany of Northern Norway in a war between Germany on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and Great Britain on the other. Apart from this, the April article signalled a more positive attitude to Nordic cooperation, without directly discussing the topic of military cooperation. Germany, according to *Pravda*, was worried by signs of increased cooperation between the Nordic countries and between the Oslo states⁹¹. One sign of such cooperation was the Nordic foreign ministers' conference which was to convene in Helsinki one week later. The implications of the article were obvious: increased Nordic cooperation was contrary to German interests.⁹² The August article concluded that Germany had not succeeded in making the Scandinavian states adhere to its "adventurist policy" to the degree it desired. The article also argued that the Swedish government sought to pursue its foreign and security policies independently of German preferences. Sweden, according to *Pravda*, was bent on upholding friendship with the Soviet Union and the other League of Nations countries.⁹³ *Pravda* at about the same time chose the unusual procedure of paraphrasing the American *Foreign Affairs* to make an identical point. The article concluded that Hitler's rise to power in Germany had created between that country and the Nordic countries "an abyss deeper than the Baltic sea". As a result, Germany's influence in Scandinavia was declining.⁹⁴

While the central Soviet press and Soviet officials only cautiously signalled a new Soviet course, Comintern publications and some regional or less authoritative Soviet newspapers and journals were more outspoken. One example will illustrate the point. On 8 March 1937 Thorvald Stauning, Denmark's social-democratic prime minister, in a speech in Lund rejected the idea of Nordic military cooperation. Stauning specifically rejected the option of Swedish involvement in the defence of Denmark's border with Germany.⁹⁵ In one of the following issues of *Kommunistische Internationale* Stauning's speech was made the object of a strongly worded attack, which left no doubt about Comintern's position. The article stated that the idea of Nordic military cooperation was broadening its appeal in Scandinavia, and noted that "[z]weifellos neigt die öffentliche Meinung in den skandinavischen Ländern - und besonders die Arbeiterklasse - zu einer positiven Lösung der Frage". The author of the article implicitly called on the four Nordic foreign ministers to bring up the topic under their conference in Helsinki set for the following April (the article was obviously written before the meeting).⁹⁶ The article further argued that Germany supported Stauning's position, which conformed to a pattern of Danish subjugation to German political pressure and demands. The Scandinavian supporters of Nordic military cooperation, on the other hand, were led by the conviction "dass man sich gegen den deutschen Faschismus zur Wehr setzen kann und soll".⁹⁷ The topic should be made the object of discussions in the Nordic workers' movement:

*Die skandinavische Arbeiterschaft [...] tut gut, sich weder von dem konservativen Auftreten noch von der Verwirrung, die viele sozialdemokratische Parteiführer schaffen, irreführen lassen. Vor allem soll die Arbeiterschaft nicht zulassen, dass man die Diskussion über diese lebenswichtige Frage (i.e. Nordic military cooperation) totschrweigt. Das wird nur dem Faschismus zugutekommen.*⁹⁸

The article concluded:

Ein solches [i.e. Nordisches] Verteidigungsbündnis würde erheblich dazu beitragen, im Rahmen des Völkerbundes die bisherigen Bestrebungen zur Schaffung der kollektiven Sicherheit und der Bewahrung des Friedens zu verstärken.⁹⁹

Nor was the article in the *Kommunistische Internationale* an isolated phenomenon. In January 1937 *Rundschau*, another Comintern publication, had criticized Stauning for opposing Danish rearmament and "political cooperation between the Nordic countries". *Rundschau* also criticized the Danish premier for not realizing that the four countries, i.e. also Finland, must join forces to defend themselves against the nazi threat.¹⁰⁰

Even *Pravda*, the authoritative mouthpiece of the Soviet leadership, gradually became more outspoken. Although the newspaper did not explicitly state the Soviet position, in August 1937 it referred sympathetically to a "rising understanding" in the Scandinavian countries about the need for common defence against Germany.¹⁰¹ Similar arguments were used in an article in October the same year. The threat from Germany, it was argued, had fostered an understanding of the need for greater unity between the Scandinavian countries. They must be prepared to defend their neutrality by military means. Denmark was criticized for "actually sabotaging the other countries' efforts to strengthen the defence of Scandinavia". Although the article did not directly call on the Nordic countries to create a defence union, the conclusion could be read between the lines.¹⁰² At about the same time *Le Journal de Moscou*, one of the Soviet journals aiming at a foreign audience, criticized the Danish "government" press for having instituted "un ostracisme total" against the idea of transforming "l'entente de Nord" into a military alliance.¹⁰³

Die Kommunistische Internationale felt the need to explain the changed Soviet position. In the article from June 1937 discussed above, the signature "Magnus" maintained that Germany unto then had no reason to be dissatisfied with Scandinavian cooperation. Germany had actively tried to

penetrate the Scandinavian countries. The Germans, however, had hardly succeeded:

*So wird es immer weiteren Kreissen in Skandinavien klar, von welcher Seite man im Norden bedroht ist und man wird immer überzeugter, dass diese Bedrohung nur vom deutschen Faschismus kommt.*¹⁰⁴

"Fascism" had suffered defeats in all the Nordic countries. In Finland the conservative Per Svinhufvud had been replaced as president by the agrarian Kyosti Kallio, and the new government of social democrats and agrarians of prime minister A.K. Cajander had set as its goal the development of the Scandinavian connection and the improvement of relations with the Soviet Union. Swedish foreign policy had been reoriented towards Britain and France, and Swedish officers had hinted that they were becoming less preoccupied with the Soviet threat. In Norway an influential labour politician had argued that Germany would probably violate Norway's neutrality in case of a European war.¹⁰⁵

Concurrent with the reevaluation of Nordic cooperation, the Soviets were moving towards accepting the need for Scandinavian rearmament. In one of the articles in *Kommunistische Internationale* quoted above, the author noted that *Völkischer Beobachter* had argued that even a "Riesentrüstung" in Denmark could not give the country any real security. The implication was obviously that left-wingers and social democrats in Denmark, who had traditionally been opposed to increased military defence efforts, should reconsider their position.¹⁰⁶ Even if conservatives in Denmark took advantage of the situation to push for a "reactionary rearmament", this fact should not lead the "working class" to oppose greater defence efforts out of hand. It was of overriding importance to make Denmark able to meet the fascist threat. He rejected the traditional attitude among Nordic social democrats that the small countries in any case were too weak to set up any effective military defence against a great power. The Scandinavian communists, who propagated a "democratization" of

the military, he argued, nevertheless understood that "eine militärisch völlig ungeschützte kleine Nation um so leichter zur Beute des faschistischen Räubers werden kann".¹⁰⁷

The *Pravda* article from August 1937 referred to above stated clearly that the Soviet Union favoured strong defences in the Nordic countries. Scandinavian disarmament, according to *Pravda*, was now being propagated only by a small number of "naive pacifists".¹⁰⁸ *Izvestiia* argued that declarations of neutrality would not stop the aggressors from realizing their plans. The newspaper implied that the small countries must be able to defend themselves by military means.¹⁰⁹

Published Soviet diplomatic correspondence sheds more light on the evolution of the Soviet attitudes towards Nordic cooperation in these years. These documents also reveal that the reappraisal partly stemmed from a changed Soviet perception of Nordic foreign and security policies. A letter of early May 1937 from deputy commissar of foreign affairs Vladimir P. Potemkin to the Soviet ministers in the four Nordic capitals demonstrates the Soviet reevaluation of Scandinavian and Finnish foreign policies.¹¹⁰ Potemkin characterized the conference of the four foreign ministers in Helsinki on 20-22 April 1937 as one step towards closer cooperation between the four countries, although he was aware that no substantive measures had been agreed upon. The conference also had made it clear that Finland increasingly was becoming a member of the "Scandinavian" group. This Scandinavian-Finnish rapprochement had been fundamentally stimulated by the improvement in the Finnish-Soviet relationship "which has been evident since Holsti's visit to Moscow", and the Scandinavians were now less suspicious about Finnish foreign policies.

According to Potemkin, the Helsinki conference had also demonstrated, that both the growing support for stronger defence efforts and the idea of a "defence union" were

generated by the fear of German aggression. This development was clearly in the interest of the Soviet Union:

This tendency towards the formation in the North of Europe of a regional agreement founded on the principles of collective security and objectively directed against the probable aggressor (Germany), must be viewed with sympathy on our side.

However, Denmark's weak policy vis-a-vis Germany, and "the foolish pacifist attitude of the Norwegian government", worked against the tendency towards military cooperation. During the Helsinki conference, the three other foreign ministers had put considerable pressure on Danish foreign minister Peter Munch to persuade him to change his attitude, and Potemkin referred to rumours that Munch left Helsinki "in a higher spirit". As a result of the pressure from his colleagues, Munch had allegedly been forced to soften his negative attitude to Nordic defence cooperation. Potemkin also noted with satisfaction that the discussions during the Helsinki conference had aroused alarm in Germany.

The Soviet rationale for propagating Scandinavian and Nordic cooperation as opposed to the policy of neutrality was further explained in a communication from Potemkin to Kollontai, Tikhmenev and Iakubovich in early June 1937.¹¹¹ Here, Potemkin pointed out two main tendencies in Scandinavian foreign policies. On the one hand there was the movement towards Nordic cooperation, ultimately aiming at the creation of a "Scandinavian-Finnish bloc". This movement was gaining in popularity, and it had, Potemkin argued, been reinforced by the foreign ministers' conference in Helsinki. Although the Scandinavian-Finnish military bloc was still far from realization, there were signs that some kind of agreement had been reached in Helsinki. On the other hand there was the idea of "neutrality", which had as one of its primary aims to weaken the Nordic countries' involvement in the League of Nations. This tendency, which was directed against collective security, was opposed to the idea of a defence union, and was being actively supported from Berlin.

With the obvious aim of strengthening the first tendency, Potemkin instructed the three Soviet ministers to the Scandinavian capitals to convey to their host governments the Soviet Union's positive attitude to the idea of a Nordic regional agreement "within the framework of the League of Nations".¹¹² This last qualification was based on Soviet anxiety lest the bloc should become a union of neutrals, working against collective security and propagating revision of the League of Nations covenant. The Soviet Union wanted a Nordic bloc prepared and able to resist German aggression.¹¹³

Thus, by mid-1937 the Soviets had abandoned their previous attitude with regard to Nordic neutrality, cooperation and defence policies. From now on Soviet diplomats were assigned the task of encouraging Nordic political and military cooperation, simultaneously "unmasking" the futility of neutralism and "naive pacifism". Echoing Chicherin's arguments from the mid-1920s about Scandinavia as a "buffer" between the Soviet Union and the imperialist powers, it was argued that Northern countries, if armed and united, could play an important role as a barrier to German expansionism and aggression.

The change in attitude was not conclusive, though. Moscow was still unable or unwilling to formulate and propagate an unambiguous policy towards the Scandinavian states: the "bolshevik" approach was far from defeated. When Rickard Sandler, the Swedish foreign minister, visited Moscow in July 1937, Litvinov in one of his speeches played down the importance of military alliances to counter great power aggression, although he mentioned the potential of "pacts of mutual assistance".¹¹⁴ The experienced Swedish foreign minister could hardly interpret this otherwise than as a hint that the Soviet Union still disliked the idea of Nordic or Scandinavian military cooperation. No wonder that it was not generally realized in the Nordic countries that the Soviets had abandoned their previous negative attitude to Nordic political cooperation and military rearmament.

Finland: the key to Soviet Nordic policies

The reevaluation of Soviet policies towards the Northern countries reflected the overall reorientation of Soviet foreign policies following the rise of the German threat after 1933. But regional factors were important as well.

I will argue that the new positive Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation was related to a simultaneous improvement in the Soviet-Finnish relationship.

Since the early 1930s, Finland had gradually strengthened its ties with the three Scandinavian countries. The Scandinavian orientation of Finnish foreign policy was officially confirmed when prime minister T.M. Kivimäki on 5 December 1935 declared in Parliament that his government wanted to engage in cooperative ventures with the Scandinavian countries "for the defence of Nordic neutrality".¹¹⁵ Thereafter, "Scandinavian orientation" was one of the pillars of Finnish foreign policy.

Finland's increasing emphasis on its relations with Scandinavia did not bring about an immediate improvement of the country's relations with the Soviet Union. Paasikivi, for instance, felt that the Soviets continued to suspect Finland of engaging in anti-Soviet cooperation with Germany, even of opting for an alliance with Germany with offensive designs against the Soviet Union.¹¹⁶ Nor did the Soviets cease their harsh criticism of Finnish foreign policy. The Finns felt that Zhdanov's speech on 29 November 1936, in which he warned the smaller states bordering on the Soviet Union not to make their territory available for aggressive purposes, was primarily directed against Finland.¹¹⁷ The standard Soviet argument was that the purpose of Finland's orientation towards the Scandinavian countries was to influence their foreign policies in an anti-Soviet direction.¹¹⁸

It should be noted that the Soviets were not unambiguous in their rejection of Finland's Scandinavian orientation. When

Finland became a regular participant in the conferences of the Nordic foreign ministers from 1934-35, deputy commissar of foreign affairs Boris S. Stomoniakov on several occasions (August-September 1935; February 1936) expressed satisfaction with this development in conversations with Scandinavian and Finnish politicians and diplomats.¹¹⁹ At the same time (February 1936) Stomoniakov told the Swedish minister to Moscow, Eric Gyllenstierna, that the Soviet Union, although it might welcome Finland's orientation towards the Scandinavian countries, was not confident that Finland would proceed on this course in the future. Only a government led by the Finnish social-democrats would be able to restore Soviet confidence in Finland's foreign policy.¹²⁰ In her conversations with Sandler in early 1936, Kollontai did her best to convince the Swedish foreign minister that closer Swedish-Finnish cooperation was contrary to the Swedish policy of neutrality. This, at least, is what she reported to Moscow.¹²¹ In turn she received instructions from Moscow to continue her efforts to reveal the "true nature" of Finland's foreign policies in her conversations with the Scandinavians.

Gustaf Mannerheim, from the Finnish civil war and until his death in 1951 a leading personality in Finnish politics, arrived at the conclusion that the Soviets did not attach too much importance to Finland's Scandinavian orientation as long as Sweden remained militarily relatively weak and avoided taking upon itself specific obligations with regard to the defence of Finland. For the Soviet Union the important thing was whether Finland would and could resist an attempt by a third power to use Finnish territory as a *place d'armes* for aggression against the Soviet Union.¹²² He got the impression, however, that in peacetime Finland's orientation towards the Nordic countries was not seen as contrary to Soviet interests.¹²³

The official Soviet attitude was to express doubt about the sincerity of the reorientation of Finland's foreign policy. The Finnish government, according to this line of argument, remained basically pro-German and anti-Soviet, and used the

Scandinavian orientation to camouflage their real sympathies.¹²⁴ From the published Soviet diplomatic correspondence it appears that the Soviets, even before Kivimäki's declaration of December 5, 1935, distrusted what they perceived as signs of an emerging "Scandinavian orientation" in Finnish foreign policy.¹²⁵

The disapproving Soviet attitude was also reflected in Soviet and Comintern publications. In December 1935 and April 1936 an article in a major Soviet journal of international affairs condemned both the idea of military cooperation or some kind of alliance between Finland and Sweden, and plans aiming at a strengthening of the Finnish defences. Both were seen as symptomatic of the anti-Soviet and pro-German Finnish foreign policy. Finland, according to the article, played a key role in Germany's expansionism in the Baltic region.¹²⁶ Somewhat later another article in the same journal continued to argue that Finland's Nordic orientation was a camouflage for their anti-Soviet policies.¹²⁷ Similar attacks on Finnish foreign and defence policies often appeared in the Soviet press.

In September 1936 T.M. Kivimäki's conservative government resigned after the parliamentary elections, and the new government of Kyosti Kallio, in which the agrarians held the majority, was constituted in the beginning of October. Soviet comments after the fall of Kivimäki's cabinet were unclear. *Pravda* argued that the change of government was an expression of the growing opposition to the former cabinet's pro-German foreign policy and right-wing domestic policies. *Pravda* did not, however, expect any great changes in Finnish foreign policy.¹²⁸ It was equally clear, however, that the Soviets welcomed the strengthened parliamentary position of the left and center to the detriment of the conservatives.¹²⁹

Minister of foreign affairs in Kallio's cabinet was Rudolf Holsti, who continued in this position in A.K. Cajander's left-center cabinet after Kallio was elected president in early 1937. Holsti, who was known for his critical attitude towards Hitler's

Germany, set as his primary aim to secure Finland's relations with the western great powers. He continued, however, to develop further the Scandinavian orientation, and he also wanted to improve Finland's relations with the Soviet Union. It is doubtful whether the Finns themselves felt that Holsti's foreign policy succeeded in bringing Finnish-Soviet relations on a new footing. Paasikivi, for instance, hoped that Holsti's appointment as foreign minister would lead to an improvement in the relationship with the Soviet Union. Looking back in the summer of 1939, he concluded that these hopes had not been fulfilled.¹³⁰ Max Jakobson, on the other hand, has argued that Holsti succeeded even "too well" in efforts to achieve a reconciliation with the Kremlin. Holsti, according to Jakobson, "had created in Moscow the impression that Finland was prepared to entrust her security to the Soviet Union".¹³¹

In his reports to Moscow after Holsti became foreign minister, Asmus, the Soviet minister in Helsinki, made it clear that Holsti wanted to improve relations between Finland and the Soviet Union. Litvinov told Holsti in London in May 1937 that the policies of the new government, including the orientation towards the other Nordic countries in Finnish foreign policies, showed that Finland endeavoured to remain a "democratic" and peace-loving country. At the same time, though, Litvinov expressed continued distrust in Finnish foreign policy.¹³²

As part of his efforts to improve Finland's relations with the Soviet Union, Holsti made an official visit to Moscow in February 1937. Historians differ as to the results of the visit. Paasikivi held the opinion that the visit did not lead to any improvement in the relations with the Soviet Union.¹³³ W.M. Carlgren maintains a similar opinion, arguing that Finnish-Soviet relations actually worsened during 1937. Holsti's and thereafter Sandler's visits to Moscow, according to Carlgren, led only to a short-lived improvement in the Soviet-Finnish relationship.¹³⁴ A different view is held by Juhani Paasivirta, who argues that Holsti succeeded in allaying some Soviet

concerns over Finland's allegedly close ties with Germany. The visit, according to Paasivirta, "generated a degree of optimism in both Moscow and Helsinki".¹³⁵

Soviet historians seem to agree that the turn to the left in Finnish politics from 1936/37, which in turn led to the red-green coalition governments, Kallio's election to the presidency and the choice of Holsti as foreign minister, indeed led to a certain, although short-lived, improvement in Soviet-Finnish relations.¹³⁶

The sources used for this study seem to confirm Paasivirta's evaluation. Erik Asmus' immediate reaction was that the visit had been extremely successful. According to him, German plans in the Baltic area had been seriously crossed, and Holsti had secured his position in the government. Asmus reported enthusiastically about a completely changed "atmosphere" in Helsinki, whereas Germany was losing influence. He concluded that "the Soviet Union has gained much in relation to Finland".¹³⁷ Some months later, however, Asmus reported about increased German activity in Finland. But Litvinov's comments in May 1937 indicate that the visit, together with the general foreign policy of the Cajander government and the election to the presidency of Kyosti Kallio, had in fact succeeded in improving the troubled relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union. Rickard Sandler, the Swedish foreign minister, maintained in January 1940 that he had observed an improvement of the Soviet-Finnish relationship "a couple of years ago". The Soviet Union, according to Sandler, had become convinced about the sincerity of Finland's will to neutrality.¹³⁸ Max Jakobson has pointed to the Iartsev negotiations of 1938 as a sign that the Soviet attitude towards Finland had changed fundamentally as a result primarily of the accession to power of a new government and president in Finland. From regarding Finland as little more than a German satellite, the Soviet proposals showed that Finland was now regarded even as a potential ally of the Soviet Union.¹³⁹

The more optimistic or positive Soviet appraisal of Finnish policies was also reflected in the Soviet press. In August 1937 *Pravda* concluded that internal political developments in Finland, reflected in the demise of the Kivimäki government in September 1936 and in the election to the presidency of Kyosti Kallio in February 1937, had weakened Germany's position in the country.

The positive Soviet attitude to Nordic cooperation which emerged in 1937 was related to a more open-minded Soviet evaluation of Finnish foreign and security policies and a simultaneous improvement in the Soviet-Finnish relations. Thus was removed one of the main reason for Soviet opposition to the idea: the fear that a united North should be involved in Finnish anti-Soviet policies. Their new view on Finnish affairs allowed the Soviets to support or even propagate schemes of Nordic political and military cooperation which should include Finland.

However, the Soviet-Finnish "truce" was an unstable one. The Soviets took it for granted that the Germans together with Finnish right-wing circles were doing their best to regain their lost terrain.¹⁴⁰ The visit to Finland in the summer of 1937 of a German naval squadron was harshly criticized in the Soviet press. Attacks in the Soviet press on Finnish foreign and military policies continued through 1938 and 1939 until the outbreak of the Winter War.

1938: Scandinavian communists propagate Nordic military cooperation

Although there is strong evidence that the Soviets from mid-1937 supported and even propagated the idea of Nordic military cooperation, Soviet signals remained ambiguous. The new positive attitude was seldom stated clearly as the official view. Moreover, various Soviet mouthpieces differed significantly from each other in their evaluation of Nordic and

Scandinavian affairs. In addition, the editors of Soviet and Comintern newspapers and journals were apparently themselves only gradually adjusting to new guidelines. In March 1938, for example, an article in the Comintern journal *Rundschau* quoted the leader of the Swedish communist party as saying that Swedish communists would be prepared to support a stronger military defence only if the "masses" had real guarantees that the weapons would not be used against workers or in the service of Hitler's Germany. More important than military rearmament was the need for "an ideological rearmament".¹⁴¹ This could hardly have been meant to encourage the proponents of Nordic military cooperation. A month later, however, *Rundschau* reported approvingly, without attaching the usual ideological strings, that the Scandinavian communist parties had called on the governments of the four Nordic countries to create a Nordic "defence bloc". Left alone the four countries were too weak to defend themselves.

The central, widely distributed and most authoritative Soviet press organs in matters of foreign and security policies, *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia Zvezda*, were still more hesitant than Comintern publications in making clear the changed attitude to Nordic military cooperation. Whereas the central press had condemned the idea during the press-campaign in the autumn of 1934, since 1936-37 the above-mentioned papers had been far less explicit. They often refrained from expressing their own attitude to the idea.¹⁴² When the Soviet press launched a campaign against small-state and Nordic "neutrality" in the summer of 1938, Nordic defence cooperation was hardly mentioned.

Comintern publications were clearly more outspoken when they discussed the topic. In September 1938, at the same time as the central Soviet press campaigned against small-state neutrality without mentioning Nordic military cooperation as an alternative for the four Nordic countries, *The Communist International* expressed strong support for the idea. An article by the signature R. Magnus implicitly deplored that the

Scandinavian governments had rejected the idea. Rather than a "union for peace", they had created a "union of appeasement and support for the fascist aggressor". The working class in the Nordic countries should support efforts to create "a strong defence union against fascist aggression".¹⁴³

The Communist International continued its campaign for Nordic defence cooperation. In November 1938 it was presented as an alternative to the policy of "absolute neutrality", and as prerequisite for a foreign policy which would cross Germany's aggressive plans.¹⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that a representative of the Soviet regional press, the Georgian newspaper *Zaria Vostoka*, in August 1938 directly called on the Nordic countries to create a defence union. *Zaria Vostoka* deplored that the Nordic social democratic governments had rejected this "single appropriate way of safeguarding the peace".¹⁴⁵

However, while the most authoritative Soviet press and Soviet diplomats were unable to formulate and signal an unambiguous Soviet position with regard to Nordic political and military cooperation, the Scandinavian communist parties took on the role as the main propagators of the idea. They launched the slogan of a "Nordic military union" in mid-1937, and continued to propagate the idea until early 1939 - when the Soviet foreign policy leadership apparently had lost interest in it.

The communists in Scandinavia adjusted their policies to the changes in the dominant Soviet position. The Scandinavian communist parties, which as members of the Comintern were hardly in a position to define their policy in matters of importance independently of Moscow, had already in mid-1937 begun to propagate the idea of Nordic defence cooperation. Hilding Hagberg, who represented the Swedish Communist Party, argued in the Swedish parliament in favour of Nordic defence union cooperation. He emphasized the four

Nordic countries' importance in war time as suppliers of raw materials, and that Nordic neutrality would largely serve German interests. A "Nordic defence union" should be created to defend "the national independence" of the Nordic countries. Their cooperation should obviously include Finland.¹⁴⁶ *Ny Dag*, a Swedish communist paper, also criticized Sandler after his radio speech on the eve of the foreign ministers' conference in April 1938 for rejecting the idea of a Nordic defence union.¹⁴⁷

Arbeideren, the Norwegian communist newspaper quoted above, continued to mirror the changes in policy. From early 1937 it gradually abandoned its opposition to increased Norwegian and Scandinavian defence efforts. Norway needed "a strong defence, much more effective than the present, which the bourgeois class acquired largely for use against the country's working population".¹⁴⁸ The Norwegian communists supported a package of extraordinary allocations for the defence which was presented to the Storting by the government in spring 1937. At the same time *Arbeideren* started a campaign for the development of Nordic political, economic and military cooperation. Stauning's rejection in March 1937 of Nordic military cooperation was strongly condemned.¹⁴⁹ *Arbeideren* pointed to the existence of an indisputable German threat to the Nordic countries, including Finland, which could be met only by a united North. Domestic developments in the Nordic countries themselves had also served to make the idea of cooperation between them attractive. Of foremost significance was the evolution of the political situation in Finland, where the rise of "radical and democratic forces" had led to a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Similar tendencies were present in Sweden as well. Germany only stood to gain by Stauning's rejection of Nordic military cooperation.¹⁵⁰

The Scandinavian communist parties' campaign for Nordic military cooperation culminated in March 1938, when the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian parties met in Stockholm and issued a declaration in support of the idea. The Scandinavian

governments were urged to initiate the creation of "a Nordic defence union for the protection of freedom and democracy".¹⁵¹ Thereafter the issue gradually vanished from the columns of the newspaper. However, *Arbeideren* continued to attack the "policy of neutrality" and the small countries' "flight from Geneva".

The policy of the Norwegian Communist Party was approved by the Comintern apparatus in Moscow. In April 1937, when the secretariat of the Comintern Executive Committee (ECCI) discussed the policies of the Norwegian party, NKP's secretary Emil Løvlien declared that the struggle for "[d]ie Parole eines nordischen Verteidigungsbündnisses" should be one of the Party's priority tasks. The draft resolution set up by the Norwegian delegation made the same point, attacking Denmark's prime minister Stauning for his rejection of Scandinavian military cooperation. The Norwegian communists' attitude to the national defence efforts was less clear-cut. The draft resolution supported increased allocations to the armed forces on the precondition that the government supported the creation of a Scandinavian military alliance and undertook measures to "democratize" the armed forces.¹⁵² The final resolution, approved by the ECCI secretariat, set up the following guidelines for NKP's foreign policy propaganda:

*Zusammenarbeit mit den an der Erhaltung des Friedens interessierten Mächten im Völkerbund. Orientierung auf einen Verteidigungsbund der nordischen Staaten gegen faschistische Aggression. Ausbau der freundschaftlichen Beziehungen zur Sowjetunion.*¹⁵³

The NKP politburo discussed the matter after the delegation returned from Moscow. Referring to his talks in Moscow, Løvlien made it clear that NKP should "energetically" launch a campaign for the creation of a "Scandinavian defence union against the German fascism". It is interesting to note that Løvlien, newly arrived from consultations in Moscow, was thoroughly misinformed about the attitudes of Nordic government circles to Nordic defence cooperation. The matter,

according to Løvlien, had recently been discussed during the Nordic foreign ministers' meeting in Helsinki. Løvlien told his followers that during the meeting in Helsinki the Norwegian and Swedish foreign ministers had supported the idea, whereas the Finnish and the Danish argued against.¹⁵⁴

The discussion in the NKP politburo also revealed the continuing difficulty of reaching an unambiguous stand on the matter of national defence. This was a "difficult question", according to Løvlien, and the Party could not "take responsibility for the defence budget" until there were guarantees that the soldiers would not be used against workers.¹⁵⁵

The Norwegian communists continued to give support to the idea of a Scandinavian or Nordic military alliance. As late as February 1939 the NKP Central Committee accused the Norwegian government of conducting policies which obstructed

der Schaffung eines Bundes der Staaten des Nordens zur Verteidigung gegen die Pläne Hitlerdeutschlands über einen gewaltsamen Angriff auf unsere Völker [...].

Norway's independence could be secured only through

*einen Verteidigungsbund mit den anderen nordischen Staaten [...], mit denen es auf Grund gemeinsamer politischer und ökonomischer Interessen und historisch, geografisch und kulturell nahe verbundet ist [...].*¹⁵⁶

By then, in early 1939, the Soviet foreign policy leadership had apparently lost most of its interest in the idea of Nordic military cooperation. Towards the end of 1938 the issue appears to have played a less prominent role in Soviet policy towards the Scandinavian countries and Finland. The Soviets may have realized that closer forms of Nordic defence cooperation would not materialize: the Scandinavian governments had made it clear that extensive military cooperation was not on the political agenda.¹⁵⁷ Soviet support for Nordic defence cooperation, moreover, conflicted with the ensuing

Soviet rapprochement with Germany. The published Soviet diplomatic correspondence for the year 1938 hardly mentions the topic, whereas documents from 1937 contained numerous allusions to the idea.¹⁵⁸ The same holds true for the Soviet press from the autumn of 1938, while Comintern publications continued their propagation of the idea until the close of the year.

The end of the Nordic alternative: Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation during and after the Second World War

The Soviet rapprochement with Germany which culminated with the Soviet-German agreements of August and September 1939 undercut Litvinov's policy of "collective security" and "popular fronts". The new situation also led to a radical change in the Soviet policy towards the Northern countries. Attempts at Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation were once more attacked and ridiculed as "reactionary" and "anti-Soviet". Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation remained consistently negative through and after the war, despite the rapidly changing international environment. During the war, the Soviet-Finnish conflict ruled out Soviet support for Nordic or even Scandinavian cooperation. After the war the Soviets returned to their pre-1935 approach, refusing to consider the possibility that a Nordic entity could acquire real independence of the capitalist great powers. Only in the 1950s did the pre-war ambivalence reappear.

The Soviet-German rapprochement, symbolized by the replacement on May 3, 1939, of Litvinov as commissar for foreign affairs by Viacheslav Molotov, the outbreak of the World War, and the Soviet-Finnish conflict, effectively removed the rationale for Soviet support for Nordic political and military cooperation. When the idea of some sort of Swedish-Finnish-Norwegian defensive alliance was discussed in March 1940, the Soviets made it absolutely clear that they could not accept the creation of such an alliance. The reason was stated outright: to Soviet eyes Nordic cooperation was nothing but a vehicle for Finnish revanchist designs. More generally, the Soviets returned to the propaganda of the 1920s and presented Great Britain as the major threat to Soviet security, and schemes for Nordic cooperation as elements in Britain's aggressive plans.

In October 1939 Comintern's Executive Committee discussed a draft document with guidelines for the activity of the Scandinavian communist parties. The document meant, in fact, a complete rejection of almost everything which had until recently formed the basis of Soviet Scandinavian policies. With regard to Soviet attitudes to Nordic cooperation, it epitomized the complete return to the "bolshevik" as opposed to the "realpolitik" tradition. Scandinavian communists were given the task of unmasking the true nature of the "policy of neutrality" of the "Scandinavian governments and capitalists". Their policies aimed at bringing these countries into the war, and "neutrality" meant effective support of the British and the French against - Germany. The document set up the following guidelines with regard to the question of Nordic cooperation:

Konsequenter Kampf gegen die reaktionäre Zusammenarbeit der nordischen Staaten, die nur eine Blockbildung unter Führung des englischen Imperialismus gegen den wachsenden Einfluss der Sowjetunion darstellt und sich gegenwärtig darauf richtet, die Interessen der Stärkung der Sicherheit der Sowjetunion zu beschädigen.

Comintern attacked the allegedly "feverish rearmament" of the Scandinavian governments, and strongly condemned the communists for having supported the idea of "national defence" in the preceding years.¹⁵⁹ It should be noted, however, that the text contained an "escape clause" which linked Comintern's position explicitly to the current political situation, i.e. preparing the ground for other guidelines if the situation changed:

Man muss erklären, das die Losung der "Vaterlandsverteidigung" unter den jetzigen Verhältnissen (my emphasis, SGH) in den skand. Ländern und in Finnland eine nationalistische Losung ist, die von der Bourgeoisie in erster Reihe gegen die Sowjetunion gerichtet ist.¹⁶⁰

One cannot say what would have been the Soviet attitude to a neutral bloc comprising only Norway and Sweden if both

these countries had been allowed to remain neutral. This was not brought up as a serious alternative before the German attack on Norway and Denmark put an end to the "pre-war" debate on Nordic political and military cooperation. However, Molotov told the Norwegian and Swedish ministers in Moscow that a defence union between these two countries, i.e. without Finnish participation, would mean the end to Norwegian and Swedish neutrality, and that the Soviet Union would have to adjust its policies towards them accordingly.¹⁶¹

An internal Narkomindel document from mid-April 1940, summing up the recent discussions in Finland, Sweden and Norway about a defence union between these three countries, confirms that the "bolshevik idiosyncratic" approach had gained the upper hand once more. The document, in fact, repeated for internal use the basic elements of the Soviet propaganda campaign against the defence union plans. The whole idea was presented as a Finnish plot to draw Sweden and Norway into war with the USSR, while the British used the plan as a vehicle for engaging the Scandinavians on the allied side in the European war. Although the German invasion of Norway and Denmark for the time being had brought an end to the discussions about Nordic military cooperation, the idea could reappear in the future, "in particular if Britain's influence in these countries is strengthened". It is strongly implied in the document that the consequences for the Soviet Union of any Scandinavian or Nordic combination would be entirely negative.¹⁶² A report from the Soviet minister in Norway, written in early April 1940, could only reinforce the negative attitude towards Nordic cooperation. Discussing Norwegian reactions to the Finnish proposal, Plotnikov concluded: "It is clear, that, under the pretext of developing the economic cooperation, preparations for a revanchist Scandinavian military bloc is *already underway*".¹⁶³

Soviet resistance to the idea of post-war Nordic or Scandinavian political and military cooperation continued after the Soviet Union became a belligerent on the allied side after the

German attack on 22 June 1941. In the summer of 1943, Otto V. Kuusinen, a prominent Finnish-Soviet politician who spoke authoritatively on Scandinavian affairs, used speeches by Winston Churchill and Per Edvin Sköld, the Swedish minister of defence, as a pretext to warn against a Nordic bloc as harbouring anti-Soviet tendencies.¹⁶⁴ The Soviet resistance to Nordic cooperation during the war fits well with the Soviet Union's general objection to all plans for small-state confederations in Europe. The Soviet point of view, therefore, was well known to the Scandinavian foreign policy establishments, although the topic hardly played any significant role in Soviet-Scandinavian relations during the war.¹⁶⁵

Soviet opposition to Nordic cooperation continued and even intensified after the conclusion of the war.¹⁶⁶ The Soviets did not only attack military or political cooperation: "Every step towards Nordic cooperation, even the social services, was explicitly branded as a step towards a Swedish-led Nordic union directed against the East".¹⁶⁷ An article in *Pravda* on 25 July 1945 "demasked" the anti-Soviet content of Nordic cooperation. From the autumn of 1946, and more energetically from the spring of 1947, the Soviets launched a campaign against Scandinavian political and military cooperation. Scandinavian schemes were depicted as inspired by the western great powers in order to subordinate a united North to the western military bloc.

Sweden played a key role in the Soviet campaign against Nordic cooperation. Soviet propaganda during and immediately after the war contended that Scandinavian cooperation would increase Sweden's influence, and Sweden was allegedly more "anti-Soviet" than Norway and Denmark. The Soviet ambassador to Norway, in his general report for the year 1945, pointed to the existence of a continuous Swedish pressure, with British support, for the creation of some kind of anti-Soviet, Swedish-dominated, "Scandinavian union".¹⁶⁸

It appears, therefore, that the Soviet appreciated the policy of "bridge-building" which was declared by the Norwegian and Danish governments. This impression is confirmed by the ambassador's report discussed above. Writing in the summer of 1946, N. Kuznetsov, the Soviet ambassador to Oslo, argued that the Norwegian government for the time being had "firmly decided not to join any political or military bloc which is directed against any of the great powers".¹⁶⁹

With the rise of the Cold War, however, roles changed and so did Soviet evaluations of Sweden's role in Scandinavia. Now the idea of Nordic cooperation was interpreted as an attempt to include "neutral" Sweden in the evolving, real or imagined, western military alliances. The bottom line of the Soviet attitude was the conviction that any Scandinavian scheme, however formally independent and "neutral", would become effectively integrated into Western structures like the Western Union, the emerging Atlantic Pact, or directly linked to American and British strategic interests. Although the Soviets were aware of the different attitudes towards the Western powers in Sweden on the one hand and in Norway and Denmark on the other, they took it for granted that a Scandinavian bloc of any kind would mean the end to Swedish neutrality and the integration of the whole of Scandinavia into western security systems.

The Soviet condemnation of Scandinavian cooperation, therefore, was not directed towards the idea of a "neutral" Scandinavian entity, because nothing like this, according to the Soviets, could ever exist. In short, Scandinavian cooperation, in whatever disguise, meant western great power influence extended to all of Scandinavia.

Consequently, during the negotiations about defence collaboration between Sweden, Denmark and Norway in 1948-49, Moscow strongly condemned the idea of a Scandinavian defence union, although the alternative for Norway and Denmark was to join the emerging Atlantic Pact. The Soviet

position with regard to Norway and Nordic cooperation was stated in an internal MID memorandum from early January 1949. Sergei A. Afanasiev, the ambassador to Norway from 1947 to 1954, and Aleksandr N. Abramov, the head of the Fifth European Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote in a memorandum to Molotov that the creation of the "Nordic defence committee" - probably they had in mind the inter-Scandinavian committee which in October 1948 was assigned the task of studying the possibility of a Scandinavian defence union - meant that the Scandinavians prepared to establish "the northern flank" of the "united anti-Soviet front of the international reaction".¹⁷⁰

This basic Soviet attitude did not change after April 1949: from the Soviet perspective, Norway's and Denmark's membership in the Atlantic alliance was only one more proof that they had been puppets of the western great powers even before they formally entered the western alliance. In the following years the Soviets were acutely sensitive about anything that might be interpreted as signs of Swedish military cooperation with its Scandinavian neighbours and the western bloc.¹⁷¹

When the movement for closer political and economic cooperation between the Northern countries gained momentum in the early 1950s, the dominant Soviet attitude was equally negative. In the 1920s the Soviets had feared Britain's influence in Scandinavia. In the first half of the 1930s they had seen German intrigues behind all attempts to forge Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation. In the early and mid-1950s, their general argument was that the urge for Nordic cooperation primarily served US interests, even if military collaboration was not part of Nordic cooperation after Norway and Denmark became members of the Atlantic Pact. Nordic collaboration, it was argued, served as camouflage for attempts to increase the United States' influence in Scandinavia. Despite the non-military nature of Nordic cooperation, the Soviets apparently were convinced about its secret military objectives. Nordic

cooperation, it was argued, would in effect involve Sweden and possibly Finland in NATO's military preparations.¹⁷²

Like in the 1920s and 1930s, however, there was still room for ambiguity and conflicting signals. In 1951-52 there were numerous signs that the Soviets were reevaluating their attitude to Scandinavian and Nordic cooperation. Soviet diplomats, in conversations with their Scandinavian counterparts, showed renewed interest in the idea. The Soviet ambassador to Stockholm arranged meetings between the Norwegian and Danish ambassadors and prominent Swedes, and articles in the Soviet press discussed the idea without condemning it outright. In February 1951 a communist member of the Swedish parliament even appealed to his government to once more explore the feasibility of a Scandinavian defence union.

Thus the "two traditions" in Soviet policy towards Scandinavian cooperation continued to coexist. When asked in 1955 what kind of Scandinavian neutrality the Soviet Union preferred, isolated or in some sort of a union, the Soviet ambassador to Stockholm answered: "There are two lines of thought".¹⁷³

In the course of 1955 the Soviet attitude to non-military Nordic cooperation changed, and in the autumn of that year Finland was allowed to become a member of the Nordic Council. The Soviets, of course, argued that their attitude had not changed, and that the new policy was the result of the changing nature of Nordic cooperation and the more "peaceful" policies of the Nordic Council. The Soviets also pointed to the effects of the new international situation expressed by the "spirit of Geneva". It was another signal of a more relaxed Soviet attitude with regard to Northern Europe that the Russians at the same time gave back the Porkkala naval base area to Finland. The Soviet refusal to admit that their own analysis or basic attitudes had changed echoed the situation of the 1930s. In the latter half of the 1930s the Soviet Union had

been equally reluctant about making explicit the evolution towards a positive reappraisal of Nordic military cooperation. The Soviet signals after the reevaluation of 1936-37 was so vague that few people were aware that the Soviet attitude had changed. Also in the early and mid-1950s signs of changing Soviet attitudes towards Scandinavian military cooperation were ambiguous. The Scandinavians still felt the dominant trend was overwhelmingly negative.

Isolated signs of a more flexible attitude continued to appear throughout the 1950s and 1960s. For example, in 1958 a Soviet diplomat in Oslo showed interest in the possibility of a Swedish-Norwegian-Danish defence union, even if Norway and Denmark remained members of NATO. In October 1966 *Izvestiia* printed a rather positive evaluation of the idea of a Scandinavian defence union, which was said to be supported by "progressive forces" in the Scandinavian countries.

However, since Norway and Denmark had joined the Atlantic Pact and later with the establishment of NATO's integrated military structure, the spectre of a Nordic defence community vanished from the world of feasible alternatives into a distant future of unknown realities. If the idea on some occasions was reflected in Soviet foreign policy propaganda and initiatives, this did not mean that the Soviets reckoned with its realization in the short run. Although the idea had its adherents who managed to keep it alive in Scandinavian foreign policy debates, from the Soviet point of view it was useful only as a vehicle for the realization of other, an more realistic, foreign policy aims. The ambivalence of the Soviet position in the 1950s most likely stemmed directly from a contradiction following from this "secondary" use of the idea of Nordic political and military cooperation. On the one hand, it was a primary Soviet foreign policy aim in Scandinavia to keep Sweden from engaging in military cooperation with the two NATO-countries Norway and Denmark. This logically led the Soviets to oppose all tendencies to closer Scandinavian cooperation. On the other hand, underlying Soviet policies

towards Norway and Denmark was the long-term goal of loosening and undermining these countries' integration into NATO's political and military structures and Western strategic defence planning. This induced the Soviets to play the Nordic card, trying to set up at least partial alternatives to Norway's and Denmark's sole reliance on NATO.

Conclusions

In May 1926 deputy foreign relations commissar Maksim Litvinov sent a letter to Aleksandr M. Makar, who had just arrived in Oslo to take over the position of Soviet *polpred* after Aleksandra Kollontai. Litvinov's message, although referring specifically only to Soviet-Norwegian relations, formulated some of the basic tenets of the Soviet view on the role of small states in international relations and Soviet policies towards them. Litvinov argued that Norway's limited resources, its one-sided economy (dependence on shipping), and its neighbourship with the stronger and more resourceful Sweden had the consequence that

small Norway [...] cannot play and does not play the role of an independent factor in international relations.

However, international developments might change this situation, and in a new great power conflict the small states would play an even more important role than they did during the First World War. For the Soviet Union, "which sooner or later will become the object of a collective attack", relations with Norway and other small countries were therefore important. The general aim of Soviet policy towards the small countries should be

to support a widening of their independence and to strengthen their ability to resist the greedy ambitions of the great powers.¹⁷⁴

Thus was introduced some of the central themes of Soviet relations with the Nordic countries and the rest of Europe's small states. *First*, Soviet policies towards the smaller states derived directly from the state of Soviet relations with the other great powers. *Second*, small states were not seen as actors of their own on the international scene: their actions and policies reflected the strategic aims of the capitalist great powers. *Third*, Soviet policies towards the small states should

nevertheless endeavour to limit the influence of the great powers, and support the small states' striving for real independence.

However, these strategic aims did not automatically generate a coherent set of policies. With regard to Soviet attitudes to small-state political and military cooperation, one set of contradictions was inherent in these general aims themselves. On the one hand, the tendency to disregard small states' potential for independent foreign policy activity bred the conviction that all attempts at small-state cooperation, however formally independent or non-aligned, were elements in the strategic planning of the great powers and therefore anti-Soviet. On the other hand, efforts to encourage small powers' independence, however limited or only potential it might be, logically led to a *positive* evaluation of such attempts: mainly through cooperation could the small powers enhance their stand vis-a-vis the great powers. As the present study demonstrates, the Soviets were never able to find an answer to this basic dilemma.

This inherent contradiction of Soviet policies was reinforced by the existence within the Soviet foreign policy establishment of two set of basic approaches: one basically of a "realpolitik" inclination, the other heavily influenced by the idiosyncracies of the bolshevik world view.

The predominant, *negative*, attitude towards regional cooperation between the Soviet Union's small-state neighbours derived from the anti-capitalism of leninism itself and the bolshevik experience of being alone in a hostile world, surrounded by capitalist states that would use any opportunity to harm or ultimately attack the Soviet state. This scheme left little room for differentiation between capitalist states, big or small, and conflicts between them were seen as secondary compared to their basic hostility towards the Soviet Union. Cooperative ventures that would give additional strength to a group of capitalist states were therefore seen as potentially

dangerous to the Soviet Union. They would sooner or later reveal their anti-Soviet rationale. This interpretation of the world left no room for Soviet support for Scandinavian or Nordic cooperation, which was consistently seen as part of a larger scheme inspired by the hostile western great powers to create an anti-Soviet bloc in Northern Europe and the Baltic area.

The *alternative* tradition, which for long periods was subdued and which dominated Soviet policies towards the Northern countries only in parts of the late 1930s, looked at Scandinavian and Nordic cooperation on the basis of an analysis of its potential role in European great-power politics. This tradition was based on a more optimistic view of the smaller states' ability and will to act independently on the international scene. It also was more prepared than the dominant trend to accept the existence of fundamental differences of interest between capitalist states. Thinking based on this *alternative* view did not take it for granted that schemes of small-state cooperation would automatically come under the influence of the western great powers. It tended, not surprisingly, to take a positive stand towards schemes of Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation.

From the early 1920s, therefore, Soviet attitudes towards Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation evolved along two partly conflicting lines, the predominant *negative*, and the alternative *positive*. In the course of the interwar period the two tendencies at times coexisted and contributed to confusion within the foreign policy apparatuses of the Scandinavian countries. Only for a short period in the late 1930s did the "realist" approach clearly dominate Soviet policy. During the Second World War and in the following period of cold war, the "bolshevik" approach gained the upper hand, although the pre-war ambiguity reappeared in the 1950s. A study of the 1960s and the 1970s would presumably show that the "realist" approach was strongly present in Soviet policy towards the Nordic countries in this period.

The evolution of the political situation in Europe and regional developments in the Northern countries provided the impetus for Soviet evaluations and reevaluations of Nordic cooperation. The present study suggests that these two sets of factors at various times activated one or the other of the two traditions or approaches which existed within the Soviet foreign policy apparatus.

The ambiguity became evident in the mid-1920s, when the Soviet commissar for foreign affairs, Georgii V. Chicherin, argued that the Scandinavian states must combine their limited resources and form a defence union to deter primarily British aggression. Central to Chicherin's point of view was his argument that a united and armed North might serve the Soviet Union as a buffer against Western aggression. At the same time, however, Soviet propaganda *opposed* regional cooperation in the North and in other regions close to the Soviet Union, and it was this *negative* attitude which predominated in Soviet propaganda. After Chicherin's demise as leader of Soviet diplomacy from the late 1920s, for some years the Soviet attitude to all forms of Nordic or Scandinavian cooperation was unequivocally negative. From the mid-1930s the Soviet approach gradually changed. From early 1937 through 1938 there is strong evidence that the Soviets came to believe that an armed "bloc" of the four Nordic countries might serve as a check on German influence in that part of Europe, and even deter German aggression: the idea of Northern Europe as a buffer reappeared. But the Soviet attitude was still ambiguous, and not without important qualifications. The Soviet press continued to attack Scandinavian and Finnish foreign policies, so when from early 1937 the Soviets ceased to attack the idea of Nordic cooperation *per se* this went largely unnoticed in the four countries. Even when the Soviets on some occasions during 1937 and 1938 openly encouraged the formation of a Nordic military bloc, politicians in the four Northern countries failed to grasp the significance of the new Soviet signals. Neither was the new Soviet position reflected

in the public opinion in the Scandinavian countries. Right up to the outbreak of the Second World War the feeling prevailed in the Nordic countries that the Soviet Union had consistently opposed all forms of Nordic cooperation.

Not surprisingly, the position of the Scandinavian communist parties underwent a similar transformation. Beginning in mid-1937, they gradually departed from their traditional stand of opposition to defence spending and Nordic defence cooperation. In 1938 the Scandinavian communist newspapers and journals openly propagated the idea of a Nordic defence union backed by strengthened military preparations in each of the Nordic countries.

It should be noted, however, that the Soviets probably realized that the idea of Nordic defence cooperation or a Nordic military union at no point was close to realization. A defence union restricted to the Nordic countries, moreover, could not alone be relied upon to safeguard Soviet security interests in Scandinavia and the Northern Baltic region. Consequently, in the tense international situation of the late 1930s the Soviet government felt the need to establish its own security system in the region. The Iartsev proposals of 1938 obviously represented an attempt to establish this kind of alliance commitments directly linked to Soviet security interests. In Paasivirta's interpretation, the Iartsev proposals, and Soviet proposals during the Soviet-Finnish negotiations of 1939, reflected Soviet hopes of "seeing Finland disengaged from the Nordic neutrals" and linked to a Soviet-sponsored alliance arrangement.¹⁷⁵

In the second half of the 1930s, therefore, the Soviet Union followed a double strategy towards the Northern countries. Their primary aim was to achieve reliable security guarantees in the Scandinavian and Northern Baltic region. Such security guarantees could only be achieved by way of direct bilateral defence or alliance arrangements with Finland and the Baltic states -- in practical terms a forerunner of the policy of

"decoupling" of the post-war period. The other, probably less important, part of Soviet strategy in the region was to encourage Nordic defence cooperation and rearmament.

The impression prevalent in the Northern countries that the Soviets had been consistently opposed to Nordic political and military cooperation was reinforced by developments on the eve of and in the beginning of the war. From mid-1938 the Soviets gradually lost interest in the idea of a Nordic defence community, concentrating instead on efforts to conclude bilateral security arrangements with the countries most directly linked to Soviet security interests. In the Scandinavian-Baltic region this meant Finland and the three Baltic countries, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Soviet policies towards the Northern countries became dominated by the dispute over the proposed Swedish-Finnish remilitarization of the Åland Islands, and by simultaneous Soviet-Finnish negotiations about a bilateral security arrangement. A remilitarization of the Åland Islands would directly affect Soviet security interests. The Soviets, however, were not assigned a role in the joint Swedish-Finnish project. At the same time, moreover, Finland was unwilling to accept the Soviet demands for territorial adjustments and a Soviet-Finnish security agreement. Mannerheim argued in his memoirs that greater Finnish willingness to accede to the Soviet demands during the negotiations of 1938 and 1939 might have led to Soviet acceptance of the Åland-plan as a first step towards a broader scheme for Nordic military cooperation.¹⁷⁶ Soviet policies in the late 1930s thus demonstrated an interesting mixture of cautious support for regional initiatives on the one hand, and efforts to erect bilateral security arrangements on the other.

After the Soviet government in the spring of 1939 began preparing the ground for an agreement with Germany, the idea of an independent Nordic defence community no longer suited Soviet foreign policy strategy in the region. When the idea reappeared in March 1940, it was doomed from the very beginning. At that point, after the Winter War, the Soviets

could hardly be expected to sanction a Nordic bloc which included Finland.

Soviet resistance to schemes of Nordic political and military cooperation continued and even intensified during and after the Second World War. During the war and in the first post-war years Soviet propaganda was mainly directed against Sweden, which allegedly harboured more anti-Soviet aspirations than Norway and Sweden.¹⁷⁷ With the rise of the cold war, the Soviet perspective changed: from now on Nordic cooperation was condemned as a vehicle for British, later US, hegemony in Scandinavia. In view of this it is hardly surprising that Finland, due to the country's special status vis-a-vis the Soviet Union after the Second World War, from the beginning was not allowed to become a member of the Nordic Council, the main forum for Nordic political cooperation, although foreign and security policies were not discussed in this forum.

It is tempting to ask why Soviet signalling in 1937-38 evidently failed to convey the new positive Soviet attitude to Nordic cooperation. The answer to this question illustrates a particular asymmetry in the relationship between great powers and small states. This relationship looks fundamentally different from the viewpoint of the two sides. On the one hand, small states will assign primary importance to relations with great powers, and matters pertaining to this relationship, even the minor ones, will often be discussed and decided on the highest political level. The foreign minister himself will be deeply involved in the process.¹⁷⁸ For great powers, on the other hand, relations with small powers are of secondary importance. Solutions and decisions will be worked out as routine matters within and by the foreign policy bureaucracy, which will be allowed to play a relatively independent role and even to decide matters of primary importance to small powers.

Small states will instinctively expect great powers to treat the relationship as seriously as they do themselves. More specifically, small states expect that matters of mutual interest, which small states make the object of major deliberations on the political level, will be similarly dealt with by great powers. The effect might be that small states ignore what more often than not is the policy of great powers with regard to smaller states: *the signals and decisions of the bureaucracy and signals from the lower political level*, waiting in vain for clear-cut top-level statements. The ambiguity of Soviet signalling was further increased by the strategy of using local communist parties to express Soviet foreign policy opinions. Rather than to expect the Commissar or minister of foreign affairs to herald changes in Soviet perceptions and policies, Scandinavian foreign policymakers were well advised to order their subordinates to browse *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, the newspapers of the local communist parties and the journals of the Comintern or other Soviet-sponsored organizations.

This asymmetry of expectations, which seems to be a permanent element in great power-small states relationships, added to the problems of perceptions which were peculiar to relations between the communist USSR and western countries. One example will illustrate the point. In 1948-49 and in later discussions, Scandinavians have found it hard to understand why the Soviet Union so vehemently opposed a Scandinavian defence pact, even though Norway's and Denmark's alternative clearly was to join the emerging Atlantic alliance. Adherents of the Scandinavian solution felt that a regional arrangement would be less threatening to the Soviet Union. We have seen that this was not the case. The two-camp interpretation of the world denied the possibility of the existence of a "third force" in the form of independent regional systems of developed capitalist states. Only international developments, in the form of a break-up of the united front of the capitalist great powers as in the 1930s, or a weakening of Soviet-Western tensions as it occurred periodically since the mid-1950s, opened the gate

for the "alternative" approach to Nordic political and military cooperation.

NOTES

There would have been no final version of this study without the generous help, advice and encouragement I received from my colleagues at IFS Tom Kristiansen, Olav Njølstad, Olav Riste and, last but not least, Rolf Tamnes.

1. The terms "Nordic" and "Scandinavian" both appear in the following text. The modern usage of "Nordic" when talking about Finland (and Iceland) in addition to the three "Scandinavian" countries gradually established itself after the Second World War. Previously, the two terms were used indiscriminately. In articles in the Soviet press, for instance, it was not always clear whether the term "Scandinavia" meant only Sweden, Norway and Denmark, or also included Finland. The important thing to bear in mind is that the terms "Nordic" and "Scandinavian" cooperation at different times denoted various combinations of states. I will try, therefore, as far as possible to identify which combination of states the Soviets had in mind at any particular moment.

2. For a general discussion of Soviet policies towards regional cooperation to the end of the 1950s, see Klaus Törnudd, *Soviet Attitudes Towards Non-Military Regional Cooperation*, Helsinki, 1961.

3. Roman Debicki, *Foreign Policy of Poland 1919-1939*, London, 1962, p. 105. On the Polish ideas, see also Józef Beck, *Final Report*, New York, 1957; and the diaries of his deputy Jan Szembek, *Diariusz i teki Jana Szembeka 1935-1945*, vol. 2, London 1964.

4. Piotr Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation*, Bloomington, 1956.

5. Cf. for instance Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc. Unity and Conflict*, Cambridge (Mass.) & London, 1967, pp. 55-57; and Törnudd, *op.cit.*, pp. 235-239.

6. This, of course, was one of the reasons why the Warsaw Pact was never able to challenge NATO's degree of integration and perfection as a military alliance.

7. Cf. Tom M. Hetland, *Sovjetunionen og norsk tryggingpolitikk 1948-1959*, University of Bergen, 1983; Mary Dau, *Danmark og Sovjetunionen 1944-1949*, Copenhagen & Århus, 1969. For a discussion within an overall and somewhat polemic interpretation of Danish-Soviet relations, see Bent Jensen, *Tryk og tilpasning*, Copenhagen, 1987.

8. Törnudd, *op.cit.*, pp. 252-253.

9. Recent research by Soviet historians seems to prove the high degree of even institutional continuity between the Comintern and certain party organs.

10. Both Chicherin and his successor Litvinov were apparently rather unhappy about the activities of the Comintern. Aina Kuusinen, Otto Wille Kuusinen's wife at the time, relates how at the time of the Zinoviev-letter affair Chicherin came to the Comintern headquarter and "held a long conversation with my husband and Pyatnitsky behind closed doors". Kuusinen afterwards told her that "Chicherin had raged against the Comintern for getting itself involved in secret activities which would greatly damage the Soviet Union's diplomatic relations. He had demanded that the Comintern should cease to involve itself in illegal work, and should leave this kind of activity to the appropriate organizations." Aino Kuusinen, *Before and After Stalin*, London 1974, p. 51. Litvinov was of a similar opinion, reportedly suggesting to the British ambassador to Moscow "that London take its domestic communists and "hang them or burn them alive" if it so desired. The Comintern itself was "hopeless", and Litvinov added: "Why don't you take [the Comintern]? You are a free country." Quoted from Hugh Phillips, "Glasnost' and the History of Soviet Foreign Policy", *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1991, p. 65.

11. Cf. Timothy E. O'Connor, *Diplomacy and Revolution. G.V. Chicherin and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1918-1930*, Iowa State UP, 1988.

12. See Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy 1930-33. The Impact of the Depression*, Birmingham 1983, p. 10 and pp. 18-20 for a stimulating discussion of the Soviet foreign policymaking process under Lenin and Stalin. Haslam argues that current policies were mainly formulated by the NKID, but that interventions from above could create confusion and result in the implementation of inconsistent policies. One can easily agree with Haslam's conclusion that "Soviet foreign policy was far from monolithic". *Ibid.*, p. 20.

13. This statement needs a qualification: I have not been able to consult literature in the Finnish language. For a general introduction to the topic for the pre-war years, although mainly from the Norwegian point of view, see Sven G. Holtmark & Tom Kristiansen, *En nordisk illusjon? Norge og militært samarbeid i Nord, 1918-1940*, in the series *Forsvarsstudier (Defence Studies)*, No. 6, 1991, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, Oslo 1991

14. Cf. Sven Holtmark & Tom Kristiansen, *op.cit.*, for brief presentations of the British and German views.

15. I.D. Kovalevskaia, "Sovetsko-shvedskie otnosheniia. 1933-1939gg.", in *SSSR i strany Evropy. Vneshnepoliticheskie problemy*, Moscow, 1982, p. 50.

16. Among the most important are the works by Hetland, Dau, Jensen and Törnudd mentioned in notes 1 and 7 in addition to Magne Skodvin, *Norden eller NATO? Utenriksdepartementet og alliansespørsmålet 1947-49*, Oslo, 1971.

17. Nils Ørvik, *Sikkerhets-politikken 1920-1939*, Vol. II, Oslo, 1961, pp. 416 and 20.

18. Egil Danielsen, *Norge-Sovjetunionen. Norges utenrikspolitikk overfor Sovjetunionen 1917-1940*, Oslo, 1964, pp. 200-201.

19. For Denmark, cf. for instance Viggo Sjøqvist, *Danmarks Udenrigspolitik, 1933-40*, Copenhagen, 1966, and the same author's other works on Danish foreign policy. What is still the standard general work on Swedish foreign policy in the inter-war period, Erik Lönnroth, *Den svenska utrikes politikens historia*, Vol. V, 1919-1939, Stockholm 1959, deals only superficially with the topic.

20. Max Jakobson, *Vinterkrigets diplomati*, Stockholm, 1967, p. 46.

21. L.A. Puntila, *Finlands politiska historia*, Helsinki, 1972, p. 180.

22. Mannerheim, *Minnen*, Vol. II, Stockholm, 1952, p. 86.

23. See for instance V.V. Pokhlebkina, *SSSR-Finlandiia. 260 let otnoshenii 1713-1973*, Moscow, 1975, pp. 298-99; or Baryshnikov & Baryshnikov, *Finlandiia vo vtoroi mirovoi voine*, Leningrad, 1985, pp. 11-12.

24. E.M. Samoteikin, "Vneshniaia politika Norvegii mezhdru dvumia mirovymi voynami", in *Istoriia Norvegii*, Moscow, 1980, p. 386. Samoteikin makes the same point in his book *Rastoptannyi neitrali-*

tet. Kak i pochemu Norvegiia stala zhertvoi fashistskoi agressii, Moscow, 1971, p. 63. V.V. Pokhlebin, in *Skandinavskie strany i SSSR*, Moscow, 1958, p. 19, argues that only the Communist parties in Denmark, Sweden and Norway opposed the "short-sighted" foreign policies of the governments, and propagated the idea of a Scandinavian defence union.

25. Aleksandr Kan, *Noveishaia istoriia Shvetsii*, Moscow, 1964, p. 152.

26. Kh. M. Vainu, "O popytkakh politicheskogo sblizheniia Finliandii so skandinavskimi stranami v 1940 godu", *Skandinavskii sbornik*, vol. XXV (1980), pp. 148-49, and note 8, p. 149.

27. I.D. Kovalevskaia, op.cit., p. 52.

28. Nils Morten Udgaard, *Great Power Politics and Norwegian Foreign Policy*, Oslo, 1973, contains useful references.

29. Hetland's study was originally written as an unpublished thesis for the Department of History at Bergen University in 1983. A shortened version of Hetland's major work was subsequently published as two separate articles. Tom M. Hetland, "Då Moskva sa nei til Norden. Sovjets syn på Norden og NATO 1948-1952", and "Atomrasling og avspenning. Sovjet og norsk tryggingpolitikk 1953-1958", both in *Forsvarsstudier - Defence Studies IV. Årbok for Forsvarshistorisk Forskningscenter, Forsvarets Høgskole*, Oslo, 1985. See also note 7.

30. Sweden withdraw from the Finnish-Swedish plan when Molotov, who only a couple of months before had replaced Litvinov as commissar of foreign affairs, on May 31 declared that the plan for a fortification of the Åland archipelago was a threat to the Soviet Union.

31. Cf. Martii Turtola, *Från Torne Älv til Systerbäck. Hemligt Försvarssamarbete mellan Finland och Sverige 1923-1940*, Stockholm, 1987.

32. Ørvik II, op.cit., p. 41.

33. Skodvin, op.cit., pp. 57-58.

34. Readers interested in the early years of Soviet-Scandinavian relations will find a number of instructive articles in volumes 3 and 8 of *Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia*, Stockholm in 1988 and 1991, which also contain further bibliographical references.

35. The Soviet press, for instance, strongly reacted to Swedish foreign minister Carl Hederstierna's famous speech (Hederstierna was forced to resign) on 29 October 1923 when Hederstierna, in the mood of high inspiration after a better dinner, mentioned the need for defense cooperation between Sweden and Finland.

36. See for instance Kopp's letter to the Soviet envoys in the three Baltic states, Poland and Finland of January 10, 1925, published in *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, Moscow, 1957-77 (21 volumes, hereafter quoted as DVP SSSR), Vol. VIII, No. 16. Viktor Leon-tevich Kopp was at the time a member of the NKID Kollegium, in 1927-30 he was accredited as Soviet envoy to Stockholm. Cf. also note 3 in the same volume for a precise presentation of the official Soviet attitudes towards Baltic cooperation at the time. For a discussion of Swedish policies, see Erik Lönnroth, *op.cit.*; and Jorma Kalela, *Grannar på skilda vägar*, Borgå, 1971. See also articles in vols. 3 (1988) and 8 (1991) of *Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia*, Stockholm. It should be noted that contacts across the Baltic Sea were of limited political and almost no military significance, and the Russians were probably aware of this fact. They were also probably aware that relations between Finland, Poland and the Baltic states themselves until the mid-1930s practically excluded the development of extensive political and military cooperation along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea.

37. DVP SSSR, Vol. XI, No. 300, Kopp to NKID, September 7, 1928. It is interesting to note that Kopp, referring to "rumours" that the visit signalled a rapprochement between Sweden and Estonia, told the Swedish foreign minister that he had reported to Moscow that the visit was devoid of political significance. There probably was a strong tendency among Soviet diplomats to colour their reports according to the presumed inclinations of their Moscow masters. SFO, minutes from foreign minister Eliel Löfgren's conversation with Kopp, September 10, 1928.

38. *Tsentralnyi Iсполnitelnyi Komitet*, TsIK, formally the highest organ of power between the sessions of the All-Russian Congresses of Soviets.

39. DVP SSSR, Vol. XI, No. 355, Litvinov's speech before the TsIK, December 4, 1929; and No. 198, Kopp to Karakhan, June 22, 1929.

40. Cf. articles in *Izvestiia*, November 22, 1928; and *Vecherniia Moskva*, November 19, 1928.
41. *Izvestiia*, August 29, 1929. Articles arguing along similar lines appeared rather frequently in the Soviet press until early 1930.
42. *Krasnaia Gazeta*, March 20, 1932. Cf. also Sven G. Holtsmark & Tom Kristiansen, op.cit., pp. 49-51.
43. Holtsmark & Kristiansen, op.cit., p. 50.
44. Timothy E. O'Connor, op.cit., p. 50.
45. This, of course, is symptomatic of the predominance of the *Baltic* region in Soviet thinking about Northern Europe.
46. Archives of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter referred to as DMFA), Box 97, for instance 133 G 8, legation in Moscow to DMFA, October 31, 1926.
47. DMFA, box 97, 13 D 83, legation in Moscow to DMFA, February 8, 1926.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. DMFA, box 97, 133 G 8, legation in Moscow to DMFA, October 31, 1926.
51. DMFA, Box 97, 13 D 83, legation in Moscow to DMFA, February 8, 1926.
52. The matter of the Danish disarmament programme was apparently difficult to handle also for the Danish communists and the Comintern. A Comintern memorandum from September 1924 reveals that the "Danish comrades" had repeatedly asked for advice about what should be the attitude of the Danish communists, apparently without getting any reply from Moscow. Unfortunately, I have not been able to establish what came out of the discussions. Rossiiski Tsentri Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Nainovshei Istorii, Moscow (Russian Centre for the Study and Preservation of Documents of Contemporary History, i.e. the archive now holding CPSU documents up to 1952. Hereafter referred to as RTsKHiDNI), 495-18-290, W. Mielenz's memorandum of September 19, 1924.
53. DVP SSSR, Vol. XII, No. 335, Kobetskii to Litvinov, November 1, 1929.

54. DVP SSSR, Vol. VIII, Chicherin to Dovgalevskii, July 27, 1925. Reports from the Danish minister to Moscow contains numerous references to Chicherin's concerns. Cf. DMFA, Box 97.

55. Quoted after Kazimierz Grzybowski, "The Soviet Doctrine of Mare Clausum and Policies in Black and Baltic Seas", *Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 14 (1954-55), p. 344.

56. DVP SSSR, Vol. VI, p. 101. For details, apart from DVP SSSR Vols. I-II, cf. Lönnroth, op.cit., pp. 58-59; Jorma Kalela, op.cit., pp. 40-42; and Aleksandr Kan, "V.I. Lenin, sovetskaia vneshniaia politika i problema neutraliteta" (Russian manuscript, published in Finnish as "V.I. Lenin, neuvostohallituksen ulkopoliitiika ja puolueettomuuskysymys v. 1917-1922", *Historiallinen aikakauskirja*, 1970, pp. 167-190).

57. For examples of the Soviet line of thought in the early 1930s, see DVP SSSR, Vol. XIV, No. 103, Stomoniakov to Kobetskii, March 28, 1931; and *ibid.*, Vol. XV, No. 252, Stomoniakov to Kobetskii, June 15, 1932.

58. The Soviet agreements with the Baltic states are discussed in Albert N. Tarulis, *Soviet Policy Towards the Baltic States 1918-1940*, Notre Dame (Indiana), 1959.

59. The records of the talks may be studied in the foreign policy archives in Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm. Documents included in volumes of the DVP SSSR give a fair picture.

60. During and for some time after the First World War the three Scandinavian foreign ministers met regularly to discuss issues of common interest. This tradition was revived when the foreign ministers of Denmark, Sweden and Norway convened in Copenhagen in January 1932. With the exception of the conference in Copenhagen in August 1935, the representative of Finland was a regular participant from the Stockholm meeting of September 1934.

61. See for example *Le Journal de Moscou*, November 3, 1934, as paraphrased in the Archives of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter: NMFA), H 62 C 6/28, Norwegian legation in Moscow to NMFA, November 6, 1934.

62. The four Nordic countries decided for formal reasons not to sign the letter of invitation to the Soviet Union, but made it clear to the Soviets in Moscow and Geneva that they supported the Soviet candidature. Halvdan Koht years later remarked that this procedure

was "formally correct, but politically unwise". Cf. Halvdan Koht, "Finland i nordisk politikk 1935-1939", *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), October 16, 1954.

63. Lönnroth, op.cit., pp. 131-133.

64. NMFA, H 62 C 6/28, legation in Moscow to NMFA, November 22, 1934.

65. NMFA, H 62 C 6/28, legation in London to NMFA, November 24, 1934.

66. DVP SSSR, vol. XVII (1934), no. 414, minute from conversation Stomoniakov-Engel, December 3, 1934.

67. See for instance an article by the signature Nemo, where it was argued that Germany had an interest in increased Swedish defence spending which might be used to support Finland "in its struggle against the Soviet Union". *Mirovoe khoziastvo i mirovaia politika*, 1935, no. 12 (December), p. 111. Similar arguments also appeared in Soviet diplomatic correspondence.

68. The letter is quoted in E.M. Samoteikin, *Rastoptannyi neitralitet*, p. 76.

69. Bakken Lauridsen, "Den skandinaviske Blok", *Kommunistisk tidsskrift* (Kbh.), vol. 3 (1935), pp. 10-15.

70. *Arbeideren* was the main mouthpiece of the Norwegian Communist Party. *Arbeideren*, moreover, may be treated as representing the point of view of Danish and Swedish Communists as well, as there was no discrepancy of views on matters of foreign policy between the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian Communist parties. *Arbeideren* has been read systematically for the entire period 1934-39. References are given below only for direct quotations, as the newspaper's line in military and foreign affairs was displayed in a number of articles of the same or similar content.

71. *Arbeideren*, 7 January, 1935.

72. Ibid., 29 March, 1935.

73. see "Kampen mot Hitlernaszismen er kampen om makten!", *Arbeideren*, 31 May 1935.

74. Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek (Archives of the Norwegian Labour Movement), Oslo, microfilm rolls from the Comintern archives in Moscow, 495-178-163, resolution from the

politburo meeting on March 2-3, 1935. Hereafter referred to as "Comintern microfilms".

75. DVP SSSR, v. XVII (1934), note 273, Stomoniakov to Kollontai, September 27, 1934.

76. Ibid., no. 360, Litvinov to Kollontai, October 14, 1934.

77. Ibid., no. 363, Stomoniakov to Kollontai, October 17, 1934.

78. Ibid., no. 405, Stomoniakov to Tikhmenev, with copy to Kollontai, November 27, 1934.

79. Ibid.

80. The above paragraph is based on a number of minutes from conversations with the Soviet envoys in Stockholm, Helsinki, Oslo and Copenhagen in files of the Swedish Foreign Ministry.

81. Archives of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter: SMFA), HP 20 D, Fallenius to Beck-Friis, September 5, 1935, quoting a conversation between Stomoniakov and J.L. Mowinckel, former Norwegian foreign minister.

82. SMFA, HP 20 D, Fallenius to Beck-Friis, December 17, 1935.

83. See for instance Nemo, "Skandinaviia - obekt ekspansii germanskogo imperializma", *Mirovoe khoziastvo i mirovaia politika*, 1935, no. 12 (December), p. 111; Nemo, "Pribaltika i germanskii podzhigateli voyny", *ibid.*, 1936, no. 4 (April), pp. 41-42; E. Giulling (Edvard Gylling), "Ukhod sotsial-demokraticeskogo pravitel'stva Shvetsii", *ibid.*, 1936, no. 9 (September), pp. 90-91.

84. Giulling, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

85. This was a common argument. See for example D. Bukhartsev, "Puteshestvie v Korolevstvo datskoe", *Izvestiia*, May 17, 1936.

86. See for instance E. Khmel'nitskaia, "Borba za neitralnye strany", *Pravda*, July 31, 1936; and V. Florin, "Gitlerovskii "neitralitet" ili borba za sokhranenie mira", *Kommunisticheskii internatsional*, 1936, no. 8, pp. 35-42.

87. DVP SSSR, vol. XIX, note 101, Tikhmenev to Stomoniakov, May 10, 1936. It is unclear whether Tikhmenev also had in mind Finland.

88. *Moscow Daily News*, September 3, 1935.

89. DMFA, Box 99, 5 F 41, Minister to Moscow to DMFA, September 5, 1935.
90. When the Scandinavian social-democratic prime ministers met in Helsinki in December 1935, *Izvestiia* argued along traditional lines that this was part of the Finnish efforts to draw the Scandinavians into Finland's anti-Soviet policies. Cf. *Izvestiia*, December 4, 1935.
91. I.e. the economic and political cooperation of the Scandinavian states, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg in the 1930s. On the Oslo alliance, see Ger van Roon, *Small States in Years of Depression. The Oslo Alliance 1930-1940*, Assen/Maastricht, 1989.
92. E. Khmel'nitskaia, "Skandiniaviiia kak ekonomicheskii i strategicheskii platsdarm", *Pravda*, April 13.
93. G. Malinin, "Proiski germanskogo fashizma v skandinavskikh stranakh", *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 4, 1937.
94. "Proiski germanskikh fashistov v Skandinavii", *Pravda*, July 7, 1937.
95. Cf. Lönnroth V, pp. 183 *et passim*.
96. Magnus (pseud.), "In Skandinavien reift die Idee des Verteidigungsbundes gegen die faschistische Aggression", *Kommunistische Internationale*, 1937, Heft 5 (June 5), p. 457. The article also appeared in the Danish Communist journal *Tiden* in the June/July issue 1937.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 457.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 461.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 464.
100. F.S., "Skandinavien. Die Zusammenarbeit und die Neutralitätspolitik der nordischen Staaten", *Rundschau*, 1937, no. 3 (January 21), p. 85.
101. "Severnye strany pod ugrozoi agressii", *Pravda*, August 15, 1937.
102. "Germanskaia agressiia i skandinavskii "neutralitet"", *Pravda*, October 7, 1937.
103. *Le Journal de Moscou*, October 10, 1937.

104. Magnus, *op.cit.*, p. 459.
105. Magnus, *op.cit.*, p. 459.
106. Magnus, *op.cit.*, p. 460.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 463.
108. *Pravda*, *op.cit.*, August 15, 1937.
109. "Bezopasnost' malykh stran", *Izvestiia*, July 21, 1937.
110. DVP SSSR, vol. XX, no. 135, Potemkin to Asmus, Kollontai, Tikhmenev and Iakubovich, May 3, 1937. The following is based on this document.
111. DVP SSSR, vol. XX, no. 184, June 1, 1937.
112. *Ibid.*
113. DVP SSSR, vo. XX, note 171, Bezhanov in NKID to Tikhmenev, August 1, 1937.
114. Jane Degras (ed.), *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, London/New York/Toronto, 1953, Vol. III, p. 245.
115. As quoted in Mannerheim, *Minnen II*, p. 55.
116. Paasikivi, *President J.K. Paasikivis minnen 1939-40*, Stockholm, 1958, p. 13.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 14. For the relevant part of Zhdanov's speech, see Degras III, p. 226.
118. See for instance Boris Shtein's statement from the autumn of 1934, as referred in Kullero Killinen, "Den nordiska neutralitetslinjen", in Ilkka Hakalehto (ed.), *Finlands utrikespolitik 1809-1966*, Stockholm, 1968, p. 86.
119. Lönnroth V, pp. 147-48.
120. Carlgren, *Varken - eller. Reflexioner kring Sveriges Ålands-politik 1938-1939*, Uddevalla, 1977, p. 53.
121. DVP SSSR, vol. XIX (1936), no. 43, Kollontai to Stomon-iakov, February 13, 1936.
122. This was probably a correct interpretation of the Soviet position. Mikhail A. Karski, at the time head of the First Western Department, told the Danish envoy that the problem was not Finland itself, but that in case of a great power war one should not have neighbors

"one could not trust". DMFA, Box 99, 5 G 17, Legation in Moscow to DMFA, February 11, 1937.

123. This is how I interpret the somewhat nebulous language on p. 56 in Mannerheim II.

124. For an authoritative Soviet commentary on the eve of Kivimäki's declaration of 5 December 1935, see I. Bodrov, "Vneshniaia politika Finliandii....", *Izvestiia*, December 4, 1935.

125. DVP SSSR, vol. XVII (1934), nos. 397, 412, 428, 460.

126. Nemo, "Skandinaviia - obekt ekspansii...", p. 111; and "Pri-baltika i germanskii podzhigateli voiny", *Mirovoe khoziaistvo i mirovaia politika*, 1936, no. 4 (April), pp. 41-42.

127. E. Giulling, "Ukhod sotsial-demokraticheskogo pravitel'stva Shvetsii", *Mirovoe khoziaistvo i mirovaia politika*, 1936, no. 9 (September), p. 91.

128. Ia. Dilin, "Smena pravitel'stva v Finliandii", *Pravda*, October 8, 1936.

129. For a pre-election commentary, see the editorial "Vybory v Finliandii i Finliandiia pered vyborom", *Pravda*, July 1, 1936.

130. Paasikivi, *Minnen 1939-40 I*, pp. 17-18, quoting a letter to Tanner.

131. Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War*, p. 28.

132. Carlgren, *Varken - eller*, p. 58-59.

133. Paasikivi, op cit., p. 15.

134. Carlgren, op.cit., pp. 62-63.

135. Juhani Paasivirta, *Finland and Europe. The early years of independence 1917-1939*, Helsinki, 1988, pp. 458-59.

136. Baryshnikov & Baryshnikov, op.cit., pp. 11-12.

137. DVP SSSR, vol. XX (1937), no. 67, Asmus to Litvinov, March 12, 1937.

138. Krister Wahlbäck, *Finlandsfrågan i svensk politik 1937-1940*, Stockholm, 1964, p. 377.

139. Jakobson, *Vinterkrigetets diplomati*, p. 24.

140. "Severnye strany pod ugrozoi agressii", *Pravda*, August 15, 1937.
141. "Skandinavien. Politische Übersicht", *Rundschau*, March 24, 1938, p. 569.
142. Like for instance in *Pravda*, "Mezhdunarodnoe obozrenie", June 3, 1938, when it was reported that the defense union was rejected as an option in Scandinavia; Denmark and Sweden being most clearly opposed to the idea.
143. R. Magnus, "Protiv Izheneutraliteta v skandinavskikh stranakh", *Kommunisticheskii internatsional*, 1938, no. 9 (September), pp. 67-69.
144. "Der deutsche Faschismus bedroht Skandinavien", *Kommunistische Internationale*, 1938, no. 11 (November 25), p. 1144.
145. B. Datvishvili, "Skandinavskie strany i germanskii fashizm", *Zaria Vostoka*, August 27, 1938.
146. As quoted (in German translation) in "Skandinavien - eine ökonomische Grossmacht", *Rundschau*, 1938, no. 22 (April 21), pp. 690-91.
147. As quoted (in German translation) in "Skandinavien. "Neutralität" oder Wehrblock...", p. 662.
148. *Arbeideren*, 15 January 1935.
149. *Ibid.*, 23 March, 1937.
150. *Ibid.*
151. *Ibid.*, 26 March, 1937.
152. Comintern microfilms, 495-18-1196, session of ECCI's secretariat, April 25, 1937.
153. *Ibid.*, 495-18-1200, resolution of ECCI's secretariat of June 2, 1937.
154. *Ibid.*, 495-178-174, NKP politburo meeting, June 1, 1937. Løvlien had, of course, fundamentally misunderstood the dynamics of Nordic foreign and security policy discussions. During the meeting in Helsinki in April 1937, the Danish and Norwegian foreign ministers attacked Rickard Sandler for a radio speech which could be interpreted as supporting Nordic military cooperation. Only Rudolf Holsti, the Finnish foreign minister, supported Sandler.

155. Ibid.

156. Ibid., 495-17-182, guidelines adopted by the NKP Central Committee, February 4-5, 1939.

157. The Åland islands presented a separate matter.

158. Only further research in Soviet archives will make it clear whether the documents selected for publication reflect the actual state of affairs.

159. There was a substantial increase in the defence expenditures in the three Scandinavian countries in the last years preceding the war. Only in Sweden, however, did the financial induce a significant increase in the country's preparedness for war.

160. RTsKHiIDNI, f. 495. o. 2, d. 267, "K zasedaniu Presidiuma IKKI 19-20 oktiabria 1939g."

161. Sven G. Holtsmark & Tom Kristiansen, op. cit., p. 85-86.

162. Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation (Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, hereafter referred to as AVPRF), f. 0235 (Referentura po Finliandii), o. 23, d. 2., "Kratkii obzor k sozdaniiu oboronitelnogo soiuzha mezhdru Finliandiei i skandinavskimi stranami", by Iudanov of the Baltic Department, April 17, 1940. I am grateful to Dr. Maksim Korobochkin of the Institute of General History in Moscow, who kindly supplied me with a copy of his notes from this document.

163. AVPRF, f. sekretariata tov. Molotova, o. 2, d. 265, Plotnikov to Molotov, April 3, 1940.

164. Nils Morten Udgaard, op.cit, p. 35.

165. The Soviet position did, however, influence the foreign policy of the Norwegian government-in-exile. Cf. Sven G. Holtsmark, "Atlantic Orientation or Regional Groupings. Elements of Norwegian Foreign Policy Discussions During the Second World War", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 14, pp. 311-324.

166. Interested readers are advised to consult Hetland's work, cf. note 7. The following draws heavily on Hetland's study.

167. Udgaard, op.cit., p. 152.

168. AVPRF, f. sekretariata Vyshinskogo, o. 11, d. 311, "Spravka - vneshniaia politika Norvegii", June 8, 1946.

169. Ibid.

170. AVPRF, f. sekretariata tov. Vyshinskogo, o. 22, d. 20, "Severoatlanticheskii pakt", January 6, 1948.

171. For more details, see Hetland, pp. 99-103.

172. It seems clear that the Soviet concern in the 1940s and 1950s about the actual and potential military cooperation between Sweden and Norway/NATO was not altogether unfounded. However, only further research in Soviet published sources and Russian archives can establish what the Soviets actually knew about Sweden's security links with the West. For a general assessment of Sweden's role in NATO activities and strategies in the period, see Rolf Tamnes, *The United States and the Cold War in the High North*, Oslo, 1991, pp. 50, 52, 75-76, 83-85, 145-46.

173. As quoted in Hetland, *Sovjetunionen og norsk tryggingpolitikk, 1948-1959*, p. 109.

174. AVPRF, f. Polpredstvo SSSR v Shvetsii, o. 11, d. 6, Litvinov to Makar, May 18, 1926.

175. Paasivirta, op.cit., p. 467.

176. Mannerheim, op.cit., pp. 86-87.

177. In the summer of 1946, Kuznetsov, the Soviet ambassador to Norway, proposed that the Soviet Union should initiate and sponsor its own "nordism". He revived an idea Trygve Lie had presented in 1945 of arranging Finnish-Norwegian-Soviet border-meetings of politicians, and presented his own idea of arranging "democratic" womens' conferences with participants of the four Nordic countries and the Soviet Union. Kuznetsov argued that such efforts, although they would be vigorously opposed by the British, would be welcomed by "leading personalities" in the Norwegian Labour Party and the government. AVPRF, fond sekretariata tov. Molotova, o. 11, d. 308, l. 9, "Dokladnaia zapiska ob neobkhodimyykh meropriyatiakh po ukrepleniiu otnoshenii s Norvegiei", signed by Kuznetsov, June 6, 1946.

178. Cf. David Vital, *The Inequality of States. A Study of Small Powers in International Relations*, Oxford, 1967, pp. 31-35.