

The resumption of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR and the Hallstein Doctrine (1955)

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[Commentary] In September 1955, Konrad Adenauer visited Moscow. Despite ideological and political differences, he was enough of a political realist to open talks with the Soviet Union on the basis of its firm position within the Western Alliance. In his welcoming address, he emphasised his desire for peace. He was under no illusions. One of the main reasons for this journey was the liberation of German prisoners of war and civilian internees. After the airport ceremony, the Federal Chancellor was driven to the Sovetskaya Hotel where he was staying during the negotiations.

[Kurt Georg Kiesinger] We went to Moscow, and, as we knew that the Russians wanted to take up diplomatic relations, it was easy enough to work out what was to come next, namely that the Russians would use the prisoners of war as a bargaining tool in order to make us agree to the resumption of diplomatic relations.

[Commentary] During the discussions, which were difficult throughout but frank, both sides of the issues were presented. Adenauer avoided any matter that could have weakened the position of the Western Alliance in the future. The atmosphere that reigned outside the conference was one of friendship. The Federal Chancellor kept pace with the numerous toasts. As he later said, 'I drank for Germany.'

[Kurt Georg Kiesinger] The Soviets had claimed that there were no more prisoners of war, none at all, or, if so, only those who had been convicted of war crimes and who had lost all human characteristics, as Bulganin put it.

[Wilhelm Grewe] After three days, when they still had made no move to give any kind of positive response to this question, the Delegation considered whether we should leave for Bonn, or what our best course of action should be. Somebody then had the idea that we could order planes from Bonn by telephone. The Russians would find out about this and, as a result, they would possibly draw the conclusion that they would need to get a move on and make an offer. In effect, on the following day at the large reception held in the Kremlin, a scene took place in which Bulganin gave Adenauer the first indication that they were ready to secure the release of the prisoners of war; he assured him of this not in writing but upon his word of honour.

[Konrad Adenauer] The Soviet Prime Minister told me yesterday evening that, even before I arrive in Bonn, the process of returning prisoners of war will already be under way in Russia. We can therefore hope that the prisoners of war will return very soon and that all others will also be with us again, in our homeland, in a relatively short period of time.

[Wilhelm Grewe] We were now confronted with the problem that, with the taking up of diplomatic relations, we would, in future, have two German Embassies in Moscow: one for the Federal Republic of Germany and one for the GDR. This situation was entirely new and presented us with the question of how we should conduct our relations with the rest of the world in the future. Should this Moscow model involving two delegations apply everywhere or should we consider this to be an exceptional case given the special nature of the relationship with the Soviet Union? In order to elaborate on these eventualities, I drew up a paper during the return flight from Moscow outlining the various options, and one of the options that was developed in this paper was what was later called the Hallstein Doctrine, namely the principle that, in future, we would refuse to maintain diplomatic relations with any state that recognised the German Democratic Republic, with the sole exception of the Soviet Union.