

The Polish People's Republic vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Germany's Eastern Policy, 1966–1976

The bilateral and international dimensions

Contents

Introduction	9
Part I. Apprehension and hopes	
Chapter 1. The turnabout in the FRG's Eastern politics and the PPR's response	23
Polish-West German relationships, 1949–1965	23
From Ludwig Erhard's peace note to the Budapest conference	31
An attempt at revitalizing the 'Iron Triangle'	59
Bilateral treaties with Bulgaria and Hungary	70
Chapter 2. The PRP's foreign policy and the FRG's <i>Ostpolitik</i> , 1967–1968	75
Policy toward the Western powers and the states beyond the Eastern block	75
Debates on the signing of a declaration on the renunciation of force and the talks on disarmament steps	106
Bilateral PPR–FRG contacts	120
Chapter 3. PPR foreign policy dilemmas, 1968–1969	131
Effects of the events of 1968	131
Work on the concept of an European conference and Warsaw's post-1968 international activity	138
Toward a turn bilateral Polish-German relations	161
Chapter 4. Negotiations on the signing of the Warsaw Treaty	195
Bilateral talks	195
The PPR's policy toward the three Western Powers	235

Part II. Disappointments and successes

Chapter 5. From the signing of the Warsaw Treaty to the establishment of diplomatic relations	265
Early regulation of bilateral relations	266
Outlining the framework for co-operation in the social, cultural and academic spheres	294
The ratification stalemate	307
Preparations for the establishment of diplomatic relations	319
Chapter 6. Difficult dialogue	327
An useful <i>unctim</i> : economic co-operation, compensations and the re-uniting of families	330
An impasse in the Polish-German talks and the attempts at overcoming it	354
The Textbooks Commission and its role in the normalisation process	367
Chapter 7. Normalisation of bilateral relations and the PPR's international activity	381
The PPR, the Soviet block countries and the development of Polish-German relationships	381
Issues in Polish-West German bilateral relations and relations with countries beyond the block	396
The FRG's <i>Ostpolitik</i> and the PPR's attitude toward the CSCE	413
Chapter 8. The closing of the second stage of the normalisation of relationships between the PPR and FRG	444
Seeking a compromise	449
The Helsinki Agreement and its implementation	457
Edward Gierek's visit to the FRG	473
Conclusion	483
Bibliography	493
Summary	513
Index of names	521

Summary

The analysis presented in the book is focused on the attitudes and policies of the PPR's authorities toward the Eastern policy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the years 1966–1976. I endeavour to demonstrate how the perception of the so-called new *Ostpolitik* of the FRG influenced the bilateral relations between Poland and West Germany and the relations between the PPR and both the USSR and the countries of the Eastern Block, as well as the diplomatic activity of the then Polish authorities in the countries of the West and of the so-called Third World.

The choice of the years 1966 and 1976 as the *caesuras* for these considerations results primarily from the bilateral circumstances, though also from international ones. 1966 has been recorded in contemporary history as a turning point in German politics and it brought about the beginning of a search for a way to regulate, by treaties, the most important issues of contention in Polish-German relationships at the very least. 1975 is often chosen as a *caesure* closing the process of the normalisation of these relationships, as it was the year when Mr Edward Gierek and Mr Helmut Schmidt negotiated agreements in Helsinki which were subsequently signed by the foreign ministers of both countries in October 1975. I come to the conclusion that this chapter of Polish-German relationships was closed following the completion of the ratification process of the agreements signed in 1975, and went on to be crowned by the First Secretary's visit to the Federal Republic in June 1976.

The first four chapters dwell on the events of 1966–1970. The PPR's first reactions to the turn in German politics were related to the sending, by Chancellor Ludwig Erhard's government, of a peace note to the Soviet Union and the other countries of the Eastern block, excluding the GDR, in March 1966 were characterised not so much by a distrust of the FRG's intentions as, primarily, by apprehension of the growing role of Bonn in international relations and the possibility that the FRG might establish diplomatic relations with those East block countries where the relationships were not problematic, without finding a solution to the border issue which would satisfy Warsaw. For Warsaw

at that time, this meant Bonn's recognising the final character of the Oder–Neisse line. The actions of the PPR's authorities in 1966–1968 were dominated by Warsaw's intention to prevent such a development. In early 1969, Warsaw came to the conclusion that its policy toward the FRG would have to be changed and opportunities to commence bilateral talks needed to be sought. In December 1970, The Treaty between The Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany Concerning the Basis for the Normalisation of Mutual Relations was signed in Warsaw. While it failed to close the border issue from the point of view of international law, it did constitute an undertaking on the part of the FRG which it would also hardly be possible to ignore at the moment of ending the partition of Germany.

I endeavour to set out the stages of both planning and implementing a foreign policy. The first chapter provides an outline of Polish-German relationships from the end of World War II until 1965. It also describes the first reaction of the PPR's government to the FRG's so-called peace note. In the next chapter, I portray the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the then authorities, both toward the Western Powers and toward some non-European states, as well as the attempts at establishing political contacts between Warsaw and Bonn. Foreign policy dilemmas, primarily those of the PPR toward Germany in connection with the events of 1968, the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact and its consequences, that is, *inter alia*, changed priorities and the different placing of accents in Eastern policy, are outlined in Chapter 3. The fourth chapter contains a description of the PPR–FRG bilateral treaty negotiations, together with the consultations between Warsaw and Moscow and a diplomatic action against the idea of a *sui generis* supplement to the treaty in the form of a note issued by the Powers in reminder of their rights.

The negotiations between the PRP and RFG provided Warsaw with a chance to implement its main premises of policy toward Germany. This success was scaled down by the fact that the border formula was negotiated first by the Soviet Union and FRG and was included in the Moscow Treaty. Nevertheless, the Warsaw Treaty included references to the Potsdam Conference, important to Warsaw but a compromise solution, as Bonn had not wished for them to be made. The signing of the bilateral treaty was deemed by Warsaw to be a success because it contained articles which were regarded as articulating the FRG's Oder–Neisse line recognition as the Polish Western border. The course of negotiations indicated, however, that Bonn was striving for a clause which would declare the border's unconditional and invariable character, not to be included in the treaty under negotiation. Both during the negotiation process of the treaty between the PPR and the FRG and after it had been initialled, the question emerged as to whether the FRG had the right to sign an agreement concerning the final character of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse

rivers. One of the points in the debate on this issue was that of the wording of a statement by the Four Powers. When explaining its reticence with regard to acknowledging the border as final, the FRG referred both to the Potsdam agreements, pursuant to which, the final settlement of the German issue was postponed until re-unification and was to be reached with the involvement of the four occupying Powers, and to its own obligations resulting from the Paris Treaties of 1954.

It was commonly believed that the fact that the FRG was unable to sign a treaty which would settle the status of the Oder–Neisse border was related to the necessity of signing the peace treaty with a re-united Germany or with a pan-German government, which did not, however, follow directly from the agreements between the Allied Powers, being rather their interpretation as presented by Bonn and, in time, by other states as well. Legal doubts also existed, bearing in mind that the documents of the Potsdam Conference envisaged that the decisions on the borders would be approved in a *peace settlement*. This was not an unambiguous assertion and did not have to mean that they would be recognised in a peace treaty, although at the moment when the Potsdam agreements were signed, it seemed that such a treaty would be signed before long. The very term *peace settlement* did not have to refer to a peace treaty. Other documents, including bilateral and multilateral agreements, could also be deemed to constitute a peace settlement. Warsaw assumed that the decisions taken at the Potsdam Conference were final and would merely be confirmed in a peace settlement at the moment of Germany's re-unification. According to the FRG's legal position, the Potsdam Treaty was regarded as *res inter alios acta*, that is, a contract, entered into by other parties, which was neither of benefit to, nor to the detriment of, that state and was thus non-binding upon the FRG. This did not prevent the FRG from acknowledging the rights of the Powers and referring to them, though. Warsaw's success consisted in blocking a statement to be issued by the Western Powers, conforming to the FRG's assumptions and in wording suggested by the latter, though a more preferable result for Warsaw would have been if such a statement had not existed at all.

The successive chapters, from the fifth to the eighth, describe the PRP's attitude toward the process of the normalisation of mutual relationships between 1971 and 1976. While the signing of the Treaty seemed, from Warsaw's point of view, to be a diplomatic and political success, the press reports, pronouncements by German politicians and a finding by the German Constitutional Tribunal undermining a point of the Treaty which was highly important from the Polish point of view, namely the recognition of the final character of the Oder–Neisse line did, to some degree, detract from the positive emotional charge that was the initial effect of the Treaty. To Bonn, the Eastern treaties provided a form

of *modus vivendi* in the then circumstances, a growing *détente* in East–West relations, and a *modus operandi* in relations with the East. Warsaw thus intensely pursued the acceptance, in the documents passed at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, of solutions strengthening its position, namely, acknowledging the inviolability of the borders and ultimately allowing for their changes upon the approval of the interested parties. Fruitless efforts were also made aimed at ensuring that the CSCE's decisions would have the form of a treaty and, subsequently, to make them refer to international agreements, which succeeded, and to bilateral ones, which failed. The paramount objective of the PPR's German policy, that is, obtaining recognition of the borders, bore consequences which were not limited to bilateral, Polish–German relations alone. It also had an impact on the PPR's relations with other countries, for example, making it possible to initiate talks on the delimitation of territorial waters in the Baltic Sea and on the designation of fishing grounds; it was also important to various institutions, such as, for instance, the Catholic Church in Poland.

Warsaw did not obtain a significant success in its bilateral relationships with Bonn. It did, however, achieve certain of the objectives it had striven for. In fact, to a large degree, normalisation proceeded at a pace dictated by Bonn, albeit that Warsaw was able to frustrate Bonn's attainment of its premises, something which it did resort to, and not infrequently. Making the ratification of the Eastern treaties dependent on finding a compromise in the talks on the status of West Berlin postponed the finding of solutions for bilateral issues. The FRG then turned the re-uniting of families, an issue inconvenient to Warsaw, into a key to obtaining an agreement and pointed to this as a test of Warsaw's intentions. Warsaw obtained the credit upon which it was set, but the removal of individual compensations to the victims of Nazism from the agenda was a defeat. It should, however, be emphasised that, particularly at the Politburo of the Polish United Workers' Party, *inter alia*, in 1972–1973, there was a marked tendency to use it as a tool to achieve other objectives and the issue thus became, to a large degree, a bargaining chip and lost its moral significance. The non-democratic, Communist nature of the then Polish authorities also cast a shadow on the solution of this matter, given that the authorities which would emerge as a result of free elections would be unable, upon normalisation of relationships with the country which had occupied Poland's territory, to ignore the issue of compensations on account of the loss of assets and persecution of its citizens.

Completing a package of agreements in 1975 made it possible for Warsaw to capitalise on the material benefits of *Ostpolitik*. The economic aspect of the FRG's policy toward the Eastern block had been noticeable since Chancellor Erhard's note but, post-1970, it became an element of the negotiating package in relationships with Warsaw. Unable to see any willingness on the part of Warsaw to meet its expectations in respect of emigration, Bonn was, in turn, unwilling to

restrict the agreement to economic issues alone. At the same time, Warsaw set its proposals, particularly those regarding financial credit, at a level so high that it was difficult for Bonn to accept them. The author's considerations of Polish reactions to *Ostpolitik* are closed with the milestone of Edward Gierek's visit to the FRG in June 1976.

Bilateral Polish–German relationships had for their backdrop a wide canvas of international determinants related to the successive stages of the Cold War. They were also influenced by the FRG's relationships with its Western partners. The FRG's Eastern policy was a part of a wider process of *détente* in East-West relationships. In the case of the FRG, the authors of the new Eastern policy also referred to it using the term *Friedenspolitik* (peace policy), mainly associated with Willy Brandt.

The domestic determinants of the PPR's foreign policy, which was that of a Communist state with a non-democratic domestic structure, are important, albeit difficult to research. Decisions concerning the main directions of foreign politics were always made at the level of the first secretaries of the Polish United Workers' Party and its Politburo, albeit that the role of the latter kept changing as well. In the years up to 1970, the Politburo was not convened too frequently. As far as decisions concerning the policy toward Germany were concerned, the main actors were Władysław Gomułka, Zenon Kliszko, Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, and, from the Polish Foreign Ministry, minister Adam Rapacki and deputy foreign minister Józef Winiewicz. The ministry influenced planning and drafted suggested solutions, though their implementation had to be approved by the party leadership, namely Gomułka. After 1971 and a change at the top, the Politburo met much more frequently; it also became a venue where the interests of the different groups within the PUWP collided, which involved foreign politics as well. The significance of the Foreign Department of the Central Committee of the PUWP was also enhanced. The role of Mr Edward Gierek himself in the case of the German policy does not seem to be strikingly dominant. Mr Władysław Gomułka is regarded, and rightly, I think, as a figure who was distinctly involved in forming Poland's German policy and attempted to influence the Eastern block's policy as well. The question arises as to whether this resulted from his personality traits, given that he was seen as an overbearing character, or from his belief that particular Communist states had the right to some independence in securing their interest, that is, a *sui generis* Communist patriotism. It is a question difficult to answer unambiguously. It seems that all these factors played their role at different times and in different proportions.

The solving of the historical legacy in Polish-German relationships, resulting to a large degree from the Second World War and its consequences, fell during the years when Poland was not a sovereign state. Together with the burden of ideology, this had an impact on the way the Polish authorities reacted to the

FRG's Eastern policy. The then decision makers attempted to use the Eastern block structures to leverage their bargaining power in relations with the FRG and in some other aspects of foreign politics. This, however, did not alter the fundamentals of the situation. As a satellite of Moscow, the PRP's possibilities were limited, particularly after 1968 and this pertained to the policy towards Germany as well. Many Western interlocutors did not treat Poland as a rightful participant in international relations, to say nothing of relations of partnership. Some diplomats either hinted or said outright, in bilateral talks as well, that they doubted whether Warsaw was entitled to make independent decisions. This does not mean, however, that the authorities were entirely bereft of any space for manoeuvre, including that with regard to bilateral relationships with the FRG. Despite the limitations resulting from membership of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the necessity of adapting to certain premises of the foreign economic policy for the entire block, in the years under scrutiny the shaping of economic relationships with the Western states, including the FRG, remained to a large degree under the control of the PRP's authorities.

In non-democratic states, social control over foreign politics is either highly restricted or entirely impossible. When assessing the steps towards the FRG which were being undertaken by Warsaw, this factor should not be underestimated. While, from the point of view of authorities, the German question performed a certain legitimising role, this mostly took the form of playing it for propaganda. Negotiations on the terms upon which diplomatic relationships with the FRG were to be established and, subsequently, the signing of the bilateral treaty, were regarded as a means with to build up the prestige of the authorities. Society, however, had no opportunity to appraise the activities of its then rulers.

As was manifest primarily in the 1960s, it was the PPR which defined the long-term objectives of its politics toward Germany, rather than having them imposed by Moscow, although some of them were close to the plans held by the latter and did sometimes have an ideological background. Apart from recognition of the borders, these objectives included *inter alia*, creating difficulties for the re-unification of Germany, for example, by boosting the legal position of the GDR, attempts at slowing down of the rising role of the FRG as a participant in international life, *inter alia*, by pointing to insufficient accounting with the Nazi past and the unwillingness to participate in disarmament initiatives. Efforts were undertaken aimed at attaining them, albeit that Warsaw's diplomatic activity also consisted in reacting both to changes in international politics, predominantly in those areas which were related to the German question and to moves on the part of Bonn. In the 1970s, both the international and bilateral factors which influenced the PPR's politics toward Germany changed. It was implemented primarily in its bilateral dimensions, although attempts aimed at implementing it on a multilateral level, primarily on that of the CSCE, were also made.

In implementing its foreign politics, the PPR applied different diplomatic techniques; direct diplomacy and semi-official contacts, as well as public diplomacy, though not necessarily with any major success. Warsaw's possibilities were influenced not only by its image as a member of the Eastern block, but also by the changing perception of the past and generational changes which made the factor related to Poland's and Germany's roles in World War II less significant from the point of view of the representatives of many Western countries. Apart from that, the FRG was a state with an established democratic system, a member of the transatlantic community, a military ally of the Western states and their economic partner.

In describing Polish reactions to the FRG's *Ostpolitik*, I researched the process of both the creation and the implementation of foreign politics by the then authorities. I also attempted to look for answers as to what degree its objectives and meanders were a consequence of reacting to politics on the part of other states, and to what degree they stemmed from the way the then rulers had defined the state interests, as well as from the attempts at implementing the premises of the PRP's foreign politics both in the short- and the long-term perspective. Both the carrying out of foreign politics by the PRP and its diplomatic activity consisted not only in initiating and undertaking official contacts, but also in looking for back channels. The then active politicians, for example, Egon Bahr and Franciszek Szlachcic, and parliamentarians often took part in semi-official meetings. On the part of Germany, it was Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski and Herbert Wehner who played a particular role. In the years covered by this study, the PPR's foreign politics was to a large degree dominated by the policy toward Germany, while its implementation was not infrequently accompanied by strong tensions in relations between Warsaw and Moscow and other countries of the Eastern block.

Beginning with 1975–1976, the normalisation of bilateral relationships took on a new meaning and passed to the implementation stage, which took the form of numerous joint undertakings, both at the national level and in attempts to develop some projects which would help the two societies to draw closer to each other, to become acquainted and to understand one another better. In the fields of not only political, but also social and economic co-operation, the differences in political systems and ideological determinants turned out to be a serious burden. It was only after the collapse of Communism and the overcoming of Europe's division into two political, and social and economic blocks that it was possible to initiate efforts towards a genuine normalisation of bilateral relationships.

