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Note about a Conversation of the Head of the Far East Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the GDR, Comrade Schneidewind, with the Ambassador of the PR China in the GDR, Peng Guangwei, on 31 August 1972

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Summary:

Comrade Schneidewind and Ambassador Peng Guangwei discuss reports that China may be establishing diplomatic relations with West Germany

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[Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the GDR]
Far East Department
Berlin, 31 August 1972

Note

about a Conversation of the Head of the Far East Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the GDR, Comrade Schneidewind, with the Ambassador of the PR China in the GDR, Peng Guangwei, on 31 August 1972

Comrade [Kurt] Schneidewind had asked for the meeting. Present were Comrade Karl, Head of the China Section, and the interpreter of the Chinese Ambassador.

After some introductory remarks, Comrade Schneidewind read out the following statement regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PR China and the FRG^[1]:

“Various reports in recent times about an intended establishment of diplomatic relations between the FRG and the PR China give me cause to direct your attention to the following:

The GDR welcomes in principle the establishment of diplomatic relations between socialist and capitalist states. At the same time, it is indispensable to consider in each individual case the concrete context and the interests, as well as the intentions pursued by the imperialist circles.

As it is known, the GDR is striving for the establishment of diplomatic relations with capitalist states and its equal accession to the international organizations. If it has succeeded so far in this respect only to limited extent, so this has its cause in the policy of West German imperialism and its imperialist allies. Still the most active circles of West German imperialism are leaving nothing undone to prevent the comprehensive and equal integration of the GDR into the international life. These circles want to internationally isolate the GDR in order to keep open the path towards an eventual liquidation of the socialist GDR. It is obvious that this is aimed at causing damage to socialism and the progressive movement of the world overall.

These very intentions, namely to damage the interests of the GDR and socialism overall, also determine the efforts by certain imperialist circles in the FRG to establish diplomatic relations with the PR China at this very moment. This becomes even more evident when looking at the forces moving toward this goal most persistently. Those are the most reactionary circles in the CDU and CSU^[2], these are the parties who are the declared representatives of the interests of the openly most aggressive parts of West German imperialism. While these circles of the FRG are not ready to normalize relations with the GDR and are continuing to pursue revanchist intentions, they want to use the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PR China in the current situation for creating the international impression as if the People's Republic of China is supporting this policy.

In light of those imperialist intentions directed at damaging the interests of the GDR and of socialism, the GDR - which has always supported the efforts of the PR China to accede to the place in international life it is deserving - would welcome if the Government of the PR China would consider these facts in its decisions.”

Already during the presentation Ambassador Peng Guangwei had asked a question, namely if the GDR thinks that certain reactionary circles want to achieve their objectives during the process of establishing diplomatic relations between the PR China and the FRG - or whether the GDR is of the opinion that the establishment of diplomatic relations China- FRG as such would signify a realization of those circles' objectives. Comrade Schneidewind indicated during the second-to-last paragraph of his statement that the question of the Ambassador has just been answered.

After the statement by Comrade Schneidewind, Ambassador Peng Guangwei thanked for "relaying the opinions and requests of the Government of the GDR" on this issue. He said he sees it as his duty to forward this statement to his government. Although he has read some reports about the question of relations between China and the FRG, he is not fully informed about this issue. However, he wants to state the following regarding the general policy principles of his government:

"1. My government is willing to develop relations with states of different social orders on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. I want to thank Department Head Schneidewind that he is also supporting this policy in his statement.

2. As far as the establishment of diplomatic relations with other states is concerned, there are negotiations held with respective governments. The Chinese Government will proceed this way also in the future.

3. In negotiations with other countries, including on the establishment of diplomatic relations, issues of third states are not discussed.

4. As far as the policy of the PR China towards the GDR is concerned, Comrade Schneidewind is aware that we have always supported the struggle of the GDR against the imperialist and militarist forces of West Germany, the fight for defending state sovereignty and dignity, and also the international legal recognition and participation in international organizations.

5. As far as contacts with capitalist and imperialist powers are concerned: like you, we have many years of experiences. We have never lost vigilance or abandoned principles of our policy during contacts with these countries.

6. Regarding intentions of certain forces within the CDU/CSU of the FRG, as outlined by Comrade Head of Department, I do not know about them. My country is developing relations with other states according to the principles which you [Schneidewind] have advocated as well.

7. If we establish diplomatic relations with other states, let us say e.g. with the FRG, then this is a completely different affair than the relations of the PR China with the GDR. It cannot be said that the interests of the GDR will be damaged if we establish diplomatic relations with the FRG.

Other states have also established diplomatic relations with the FRG already, which is a state founded already many years ago. I am of the opinion that the establishment of diplomatic relations between this country and the FRG has not damaged the interests of the GDR. To my mind, it is not necessary to still talk much about this. You know our positions.

I am declaring again that I will forward the statement and the requests by the Government of the GDR to my Government."

Comrade Schneidewind thanked for the willingness to forward his statements to the Chinese Government. He emphasized he had made them as Head of the Far East Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the GDR. Obviously they do not stand in contradiction to the policy of the Party and Government of the GDR. In the context of statements by Ambassador Peng Guangwei, Comrade Schneidewind commented on his remark that China would always support the GDR against West German militarism and revanchism. He [Schneidewind] repeated that it would be a support of the GDR, if the Government of the PR China would consider the outlined facts for its future decisions.

Referring to Peng's remark he would have only limited information, Comrade Schneidewind emphasized we also have no official information. We are informing ourselves mostly from Western press reports, some statements by FRG politicians, and some sparse news in the Chinese press. He has used the Western reports showing a cause for concern as the reason for making his statements today.

Ambassador Peng Guangwei asked the question what forces in the FRG he is referring to, and whether Comrade Schneidewind is referring to the Schröder visit^[3] in China. Comrade Schneidewind stated this refers mostly to the most reactionary circles in the CDU/CSU to which Strauß^[4], Barzel^[5], and also Schröder belong.

Ambassador Peng Guangwei then responded he thinks it is necessary and useful to talk about such issues. Such meetings are helpful to mutual understanding. He will forward the statements by Comrade Schneidewind to his government. He thinks that his government will review these statements but make a sovereign decision.

Personally he would not know, however, whether efforts by certain circles in the FRG to establish diplomatic relations with the PR China are directed against the GDR. There is a state which in 1955^[6], still in the times of Adenauer^[7], established diplomatic ties with the FRG. He does not know whether one could interpret that as directed against the GDR (subsequently he used repeatedly this argumentation).

Comrade Schneidewind noted pointedly that the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the FRG in 1955 had been coordinated with the GDR and other socialist states, including the PR China. Given the time back then, this was an appropriate step.

Ambassador Peng Guangwei attempted to call this into question.

Comrade Schneidewind referred again to the position of the GDR regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations. He repeated his statement that the GDR will welcome, if the PR China will consider in its future decisions concerning relations with the FRG the mentioned factual situation.

He is assuming that Ambassador Peng has understood what this is about. He thanked him for his willingness to forward his statements to the Chinese government.

The conversation was held in a factual atmosphere.

[Signed] Karl
Head of Section

CC:

1. 1st Copy Comrade [Foreign Minister Oskar] Fischer
2. 2nd Copy [SED] Central Committee, International Relations Department

3. 3rd Copy [Foreign Ministry] Central Information Unit
4. 4th Copy Embassy Beijing
5. 5th Copy Far East Department, Section China

[1] Federal Republic of Germany, i.e. West Germany.

[2] Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union, the major conservative parties in West Germany. In August 1972 they were in the opposition.

[3] CDU politician Gerhard Schröder (1910-1989), in 1972 Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the West German parliament (Bundestag), visited China in coordination with the West German government from 13 to 29 July 1972. He also met Zhou Enlai and laid the groundwork for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PR China and the FRG. The official establishment then occurred on 11 October 1972.

[4] Franz-Josef Strauß (1915-1988), in 1972 Chairman of the CSU.

[5] Rainer Barzel (1924-2006), in 1972 Chairman of the CDU and opposition leader in the West German parliament.

[6] Referring to the Soviet Union.

[7] Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), Federal Chancellor of West Germany 1949-1963.