

August 26, 1976

**Conversation between Foreign Minister Genscher
and Chinese Ambassador Wang Shu**

Citation:

"Conversation between Foreign Minister Genscher and Chinese Ambassador Wang Shu", August 26, 1976, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ed., Akten zur auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: 1975. 1. Juli bis 31. Dezember 1976 (München: Oldenbourg, 2007), 504-509. Translated by Bernd Schaefer.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/119986>

Summary:

A conversation between West German Foreign Minister Genscher and Chinese Ambassador Wang Shu about European security and developments in Africa. The Foreign Minister expresses interest in a visit to Germany by the Chinese Foreign Minister.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Conversation

between Foreign Minister Genscher and Chinese Ambassador Wang Shu

April 26, 1976[1]

Transcript of meeting with the Chinese Ambassador on April 26, 1976; Participants: VLR Wegner, Chief Protocol[2], Chinese interpreter.

The Foreign Minister asked the Chinese ambassador for his assessment of the international situation.

Ambassador: Danger of war is growing due to armament superiority of the Soviet Union.[3] Angola is testimony to the interference of the Soviet Union, and it cannot be excluded that there also will be other Angolas, and just not in Africa (Middle East, Southern Flank of Europe).

In the United States there currently exists a sentiment of appeasement – comparable in a way to Munich 1938. The Chinese side has critically mentioned this to American interlocutors in Beijing. This is why there exists a major interest in Beijing in a united Western Europe; there are hopes for an accelerated process of unification, in order for Europe to become capable to rely first on itself and only second on others.

The Foreign Minister asked twice what people do represent this American sentiment, and the Ambassador replied with the remark, the Chinese side told Foreign Minister Kissinger during his China visit in 1975 critically[4] that the Americans attempt to undertake a policy “of smashing ten flies with ten fingers”. The United States would not have any strategic focus while, in contrast, the strategic focus for the Soviet Union is clearly Europe.

The question by the Foreign Minister, whether the [Soviet] strategic focus would not rather lie in Eastern Europe, was answered by the ambassador in the negative; and just with a reference to the military balance of forces in Europe. If the Soviet Union wants to dominate the world, it first has to take Europe as a necessary step. Still, despite all that the Chinese cannot rest comfortably.

The Foreign Minister asked about the Chinese opinion on developments in Africa.

Ambassador: Chinese policy does support African independence economically and politically. Beijing is in favor of starting a dialogue with the Third World.

Foreign Minister: The federal [West German] government is concerned about the enormous armament efforts by the Soviet Union. They are exceeding what the Soviet Union does need for its own security. This is why he demands a high efficiency of NATO as a basis for our own security. Also, he is concerned about the different economic situations in various EC countries, as those are both causes of political instability and resulting limitations to freedom of action by the European governments.

The Foreign Minister then asked about the Chinese assessment of the current situation in Italy. He specified his question whether the ambassador considers the Italian Communist Party (PCI) as independent from Moscow in the long run.

The Ambassador called the PCI Italian revisionists. The situation will get more complicated if the PCI will be allowed to join an Italian government. On the other hand, a PCI participation in government would not yet represent a serious concern.

On the Chinese side, the level of dependence of the PCI and the other Western European communist parties has not yet been thought through completely. The question is here, whether the PCI or other Western European communist parties will adopt a position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union like Yugoslavia. In this respect, a PCI participation in government would not be that dangerous. To the question, what other communist parties in Western Europe are revisionists from the Chinese perspective, the ambassador replied: "almost all of them". The additional question about the DKP [West German Communist Party] did not warrant a response by the Ambassador due to the party's lack of actual political influence.

The Ambassador asked the Foreign Minister for his assessment of the Soviet Union after the Party Congress[5], and whether there will be a change in Soviet foreign policy. Foreign Minister: Party Congress reconfirmed Soviet foreign policy. We are witnessing a period of expansive Soviet foreign policy that now attempts to create spheres of influence or expand existing ones. This is why we [West Germany] want to strengthen the European Community in addition to strengthening the NATO alliance. Not all democratic leaders in Western Europe have recognized how much time is of the essence. Our concerns are not less when it comes to Africa. We categorically stand on the side of African independence.

Referral to the February Declaration by the nine EC Foreign Ministers.[6]

He, the Foreign Minister, has always been very much in support of Secretary of State Kissinger's visit to Africa.[7] We take our Africa policy especially serious since Africa is actually a region that neighbors Europe. The discussion in the West about its interests in Southern Africa differs with regard to the short-term and long-term objectives: Proponents of short-term interests advocate a strengthening of South Africa; the others wish for African majority governments in Southern Africa in order to counter the strive of the Soviet Union for new spheres of influence.

Here we have a major task for the People's Republic of China to define the true interests of the Africans.

He, the Foreign Minister, and after him much more scathing the Chinese representative[8], would have stressed before the 7th Special [United Nations] Session of the General Assembly that the socialist states do not sufficiently meet their obligations to bridge the gap between developing and industrial countries.[9]

The Ambassador asked whether American policy will change emphasis after the elections.[10] The Foreign Minister replied, a different emphasis has already occurred as of today since in part developments are being reviewed more critically. Just Kissinger's visit to Africa comes in this vein.

The Foreign Minister expressed his satisfaction about the progress of developments in the Middle East over the past two years. The Federal Government does especially welcome the policy of [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat. With great satisfaction, the Federal Government thus took note of the Chinese-Egyptian agreement.[11] A strong Egypt is an important guarantor of stability in the Middle East. Egypt under the leadership of Sadat has demonstrated how Third World states can embark on an independent course. Sadat first evaded Western and later Soviet influence; both, and not just the former, is important.

The Ambassador emphasized in agreeing that the Third World has not yet had sufficient experiences in how to deal with the Soviet Union. Before Egypt, the People's Republic of China has actually made the same experiences.

For his part, the Foreign Minister then asked about Chinese assessments on domestic

and foreign policy outcomes of the Soviet party congress.

The Ambassador repeated in part his statements from the beginning of the conversation. He referred to contradictions in Soviet statements that on the one hand affirm a policy of detente and on the other support liberation movements in Africa and socialist revolutions in the West.

The Foreign Minister then moved to developments in China. He called it a good sign when we are interested in events in China, as well as calling it positive when China is following the situation here in our country.

The Foreign Minister welcomed the statement made to Mr. [Uwe] Ronneburger in Beijing[12], according to which the People's Republic of China welcomes German unification in the same way, no matter whether it occurs under capitalist or socialist auspices. Positions of other countries towards our national question are important for our attitudes towards those countries.

Ambassador replied to the question of the Foreign Minister: Currently there is a movement underway in China called "Wind against the Wind of Rightist Deviationists" [Criticize Rightist Deviationism][13]. This is about a continuation and consolidation of the Cultural Revolution.

The correct path pointed out by Mao must be followed, in order to avoid also in China the path of revisionist deviation, as pursued among others by Khrushchev.

It would be difficult for foreigners to understand the events in China correctly.

This would not result in a change of Chinese foreign policy. The latter is determined by the facts in the world and thorough analysis by Mao himself.

There will be no reason to change foreign policy as long as the path outlined by Mao continues to be followed.

To the question raised by the Foreign Minister on relations with the Soviet Union, the Ambassador responded only to the extent that he called the Chinese-Soviet disputes fundamental. An end to those disputes he only viewed as possible, if the social-imperialist systems in the Soviet Union will change and the Soviet Union ends its social-imperialist policy.

The Foreign Minister asked whether the statement made to Mr. Ronneburger represents official Chinese policy. The Ambassador said yes.

The Chinese side has already told CDU Deputies [Werner] Marx and [Alfred] Dregger[14] that a reunified Germany does not represent any danger. One does talk the same way also to Western Europeans. The Soviet Union is the big threat.

In conclusion, the Foreign Minister emphasized his interest in a visit by the Chinese Foreign Minister[15] to Germany.

Section 010, Vol. 178660

[1] The transcript was prepared by VLR Waller on April 26, 1976. Was submitted to Section Head Kinkel on April 27, 1976.

[2] Franz Joachim Schoeller.

[3] On April 29, 1975 Ambassador [Rolf] Pauls, Beijing, reported about a meeting in the Chinese Ministry of Defense on April 23, 1975 about the Chinese proposition "a war in Europe is inevitable". The Chinese Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Li Ta, would have explained the following: "Both superpowers are striving for global hegemony, and the ever growing rivalry will lead to a war the more intense the rivalry becomes. War would be nothing more than the continuation of politics; with this the Chinese present themselves almost as the last remaining supporters of the Clausewitz theory. Military balance would be threatened for the reason that, in contrast to the past, the United States are no longer superior to the Soviet Union. In particular, the Soviet Union has achieved superiority faster than the U.S. in the decisive area, namely in Europe. As a result of its focused armament build-up program in Europe on the ground and in the air, and around Europe on the sea, the Soviet Union is rapidly increasing its strength. The U.S. Secretary of Defense [James] Schlesinger has recognized this, and he is eager to reinforce the American forces in Europe. [...] On the other hand, due to its growing superiority, it becomes ever more easier for the Soviet Union to threaten war or even make war. China's threat from the Soviet Union is a sideshow, you could even call it a diversion." See Telex No. 170; Section 213, Vol. 112769.

[4] U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger visited the People's Republic of China from October 19 to 23, 1975. On October 27, 1975 Ambassador [Berndt] von Staden, Washington, reported the U.S. State Department had provided the following information on this visit: "The Chinese repeated their criticism of Western detente policy with arguments already known: double-crossing by the Soviet Union in order to lull the West with a false sense of security, especially through the CSCE. They again emphasized their thesis that a new world war, caused by the Soviet Union, is inevitable due to the rivalry of the superpowers. The Americans have the impression this is a thesis by Mao himself that all other interlocutors adopt. The Chinese implicitly indicated their major concern would not lie with their own security but primarily with the Western states and Japan. [...] Beijing is afraid in this context that the United States has been weakened by the outcome of the Indochina War, mostly however by American domestic controversies (Watergate, frictions between Congress and administration on foreign policy issues)." See Telex No. 3197, Section 303, Vol.101543.

[5] On the XXV CPSU Party Congress between February 24 and March 5, 1976 in Moscow see [AAPD] document 69.

[6] For the Africa Declaration from the Foreign Ministers of the EC member in the context of the European Political Cooperation meeting on February 23, 1976 see document 62.

[7] U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger visited between April 24 and May 2, 1976 Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zaire, Liberia, and Senegal. In the aftermath, he stayed from May 3 to 7, 1976 in Nairobi for the opening of the IV UNCTAD [United Nations Conference for Trade and Development] Conference.

[8] Huang Hua.

[9] The 7th Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly on development and international cooperation was held from September 1 to 16, 1976 in New York. See AAPD 1975, II, document 270.

On September 2, 1975 Foreign Minister Genscher declared before the 7th Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York: "The opening of markets of the industrial countries is supposed to guarantee the developing countries an increasing share of world trade. The [West German] Federal Government therefore supports a reduction in tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. In the framework of the European Community, it is undertaking efforts during the ongoing GATT negotiations to further improve the access of developing countries to the import markets of industrial countries. I want to emphasize in this context that my country is among the top of market economy countries with regard to per capita imports from the developing countries. These imports amount to ten times as much as the per capita imports of the state-trading [socialist] countries." See Bulletin 1975, p. 1059f.

[10] On November 2, 1976 presidential and congressional elections were held in the United States.

[11] Egyptian Vice President [Hosni] Mubarak visited the People's Republic of China from April 18 to 25, 1976. Concerning outcomes of this visit, Embassy Counselor I. Class Strenziok, Cairo, noted on April 28, 1976: "The only tangible outcome so far is the protocol on military cooperation signed in Beijing on April 21, 1976 by the Egyptian Minister for the Armament Industry and the Chinese Deputy Chief of the General Staff. So far no reliable information about its content are to be obtained here in Cairo. China's military support for Egypt so far is limited to the delivery of pods for Soviet MIG 17, agreed already by the end of last year. Newer Chinese commitments also seem to concern mostly contributions towards maintenance of this type of aircraft. It remains to be seen whether, in addition to that, China is willing and capable to deliver MIG 21 spare parts from its own production, and whether to provide Egypt with efficient support based on its own [Chinese] experiences for the build-up of an own [Egyptian] armament industry." See written report No. 737; Section 310, Vol. 108718.

[12] The Chairman of the FDP [Free Democratic Party] in [the West German State of] Schleswig-Holstein, [Uwe] Ronneburger, visited the PRC from March 31 to April 19, 1976.

[13] On April 7, 1976 Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping was removed from all his state and party functions following a decision by the CCP Politburo. On April 20, 1976 Ambassador Pauls, Beijing, reported: "The orchestrated popular acclamation to the removal of Deng and the appointment of Hua is continuing in the entire country. Apparently it is intended to present the -in due time upcoming- Central Committee plenum and subsequent sessions of state organs with a fait accompli. [...] The Rightist Deviationism campaign focused on Deng is already called in part "Criticize Deng Movement" by the Chinese media. However, the assessment of Deng is still not yet uniform. According to the apparently official version, he is a bourgeois democrat whose socialist awareness lagged behind. The radicals, however, who continue to have permission to publish what they want, vilify Deng in the same breath as Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, and the darkest reaction." See Telex No. 160, Section 303, Vol. 103171.

[14] On the visit by CDU parliamentary Deputies Marx and Dregger to the People's Republic of China see document 61.

[15] Qiao Guanhua.