

October 31, 1975

**Conversation between Federal Chancellor Schmidt
and Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping
in Beijing**

Citation:

"Conversation between Federal Chancellor Schmidt and Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping in Beijing", October 31, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ed., Akten zur auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: 1975. 1. Juli bis 31. Dezember 1975 (München: Oldenbourg, 2006), 1514-1519.

Translated by Bernd Schaefer.

<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/119995>

Summary:

Schmidt and Deng Xiaoping discuss Soviet nuclear capabilities and threats to other countries. Deng Xiaoping expresses his desire to continue these conversations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Conversation

between Federal Chancellor Schmidt
and Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping in Beijing

October 31, 1975[1]

Begin of Meeting: 1610 hours

End of Meeting: 1830 hours

Attachment: List of Participants[2]

Deputy Prime Minister Deng opened the conversation remarking that yesterday[3] Mao Zedong had outlined the fundamentals; the talks are supposed to be conducted in order to better understand mutual positions. One does not insist that the other side has to accept the opinion of the conversation partner.

China does not believe in detente, and also not in a durable peace. It does not matter whether a political leader of the United States, or Mr. Brezhnev as well, are pursuing a dangerous policy. The war will emerge rather independently from the will of the humans. Mao outlined yesterday that a change of Soviet policy is not to be expected. A return to the policy of Lenin has to be excluded as well. The nature of the Soviet Union has changed. Over the last twenty years it degenerated from the first socialist to a social-imperialist state. Many people believe that Khrushchev was more aggressive than Brezhnev; the harsh reality has proven the opposite. Brezhnev has deployed one million soldiers at the Chinese border. He has carved up Pakistan, contributed to aggravation of the situation in the Middle East, and occupied Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Causes for a new war have to be identified in the following facts:

- 1) the development of the social-imperialist system of society,
- 2) the Soviet pursuit of global hegemony,
- 3) the growth of the Soviet military and economic potential.

Brezhnev is following a more adventurist policy than Khrushchev because the situation has changed. The strive for hegemony is a result of the change of social systems, as well as of the fact that the Soviet potential (nuclear weapons included) has grown.

Regarding the question of military balance in the world, Deng stated that disarmament agreements signed since 1963 (Test Ban of 1963[4], and the treaties of Moscow 1972[5] and Vladivostok 1974[6]) have not just reduced the gap between the Soviet Union and the United States. They also had the result that, as of now, at the least a balance between powers has been reached. In parts, the Soviet Union is even superior. One [the People's Republic of China] has asked [U.S. Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger in Beijing[7] whether he really believes in a breakthrough in disarmament negotiations, as he had stated in Tokyo.[8] In China, one does not believe this. One has told Kissinger, the arms race will continue and a balance cannot be achieved.

It would play an important role in this context that there are not just nuclear weapons. which are relevant here. A future war will probably much more likely fought with conventional arms. This is a consequence from the situation of nuclear parity. Furthermore, it is always the objective of a war to occupy countries, to control

peoples, and to gain resources. Yet this is unachievable with complete destruction of a country. If you think about Yugoslavia or Romania: The Soviet Union will not have to use nuclear weapons there. It will rather be tempted to achieve its objectives there with conventional weapons. For that reason, China is appreciating that the Federal Republic of Germany expands its conventional armed forces.

A special danger would also arise from the build-up of naval forces, where the Soviet Union is in the lead. (Interjection by the Federal Chancellor: The Soviet forces would also be increasingly equipped with nuclear arms.) Deng continued to say that the Soviet Navy in the Pacific would be three times as strong as the Seventh Fleet. Given these circumstances, detente cannot be realized. It must be a matter of concern that the CSCE gets constantly propagated by the Soviet Union. The Soviet motives would be simple:

- 1) The Soviet Unions wants to lull to sleep the vigilance of the Europeans and
- 2) to pursue its further arms build-up behind the umbrella of the CSCE.

From what country does a danger of a Third World War emanate? Only two powers could unleash it; however, neither China nor the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Great Britain, or Japan have the capacities to do it. Even the United States does not dare to do this. The latter are rather busy to maintain positions gained in 1945, though they are no longer able to keep them. Therefore, the source for a Third World War is the Soviet Union. Yesterday Mao Zedong had stated that this war would not come in three to five years, it could rather still take ten to thirty years. Thus one may not hope for the preservation of the balance and detente.

Subsequently Deng outlined why China is viewing Europe as the main focus of global policy. China would not be interested to redirect the Soviet threat to Europe. Rather Europe would be main focus of Soviet strategy, because only whoever controls Europe is able to achieve world hegemony. This policy is conducted in various ways: subversion, infiltration, armed struggle. This is also why the Soviet Union has deployed three quarters of its armed forces and its best weapons in the West.

He would not fear an attack on China since it would not gain the Soviet Union world hegemony. At best, the Soviets would be able to occupy China's cities but not the countryside. Since Khrushchev the Soviet Union is working against China and wants to achieve control over it. Thus the Soviet Union proposed in 1958 a joint naval command that would have subjected China's coasts to Soviet control.[9] Since then relations would have deteriorated. In addition, there arose confrontation over ideological matters.[10]

When one assesses the Soviet threat to China, [Deng stated,] you have also to consider that Soviet forces along the Chinese border are not just deployable against China, but also against the United States and maybe Japan. China is not afraid of one million soldiers. In recent years, the United States would have warned China multiple times before an imminent attack of the Soviets. Yet nothing has happened. China is prepared; and also one million soldiers along a border of 7,000 kilometers is not much. This is why China believes the Soviets do not have the will to attack the country. Operational targets of the Soviets could be Northeastern China (Manchuria), Beijing, maybe even all of China north of the Yangtze River. Such a war would last at least for twenty years, and the Soviet would have to move over from the West at least an additional two million forces. To [our] question of a potential nuclear strike on Chinese bases, Deng replied even that would not change anything because China will continue to exist.

In light of the security situation as apparent to Beijing, China would have no objections to the presence of American troops in Europe; this would be warranted reality. One is harboring doubts, however, whether the appeasement policy of the United States towards the Soviets will result in a new Munich.[11] Many things are

very strongly reminiscent to the policy of [former British Prime Minister Neville] Chamberlain and [former French Prime Minister Edouard] Daladier. The Helsinki Conference[12] is a case in point. It is necessary to reiterate that today the Soviet Union's military strength is superior to the strength of the United States. The weak points of the Soviets are: They do not have enough grain, and their industry and technologies are backward. Therefore it is wrong to supply the Soviet Union with grain, provide credits or build up industrial capacities, as this is strengthening the Soviet position. It also is an illusion to believe that this way one can make the Soviet Union dependent on the West. All those measures, which include granting seven million U.S. dollar of credit from the West, are just strengthening the Soviet potential (interjection by the Federal Chancellor: so far the Soviet Union has not received even a penny from the [West German] federal government).

It also would be an illusion to speculate about a change of Soviet policy after a departure of Brezhnev. One [China] has also alerted [U.S. Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger to that fact. In light of those speculations, China is doubtful whether the United States are ready to defend Europe. Would they fight for Yugoslavia, Germany, Scandinavia? The appeasement policy towards the Soviet Union is only comparable to the flight from Dunkirk[13]. However, it would correspond to the true interests of the United States, if they would fight together with Europe against the Soviet Union. Mao has said the United States are shirking from this responsibility since they suffered 50,000 casualties in Vietnam. In China's opinion, however, a stable partnership between the United States and Europe is a necessity, since otherwise there exists no balance. This is why one has asked Kissinger, whether the U.S. would act like at Dunkirk. Kissinger had said that it depends essentially on Europe's behavior. China thinks that Europe has to unify in order to defend itself alone if need be.

Deng then moved to the situation in Asia. It would have developed favorably for America, even after the U.S. withdrawal from Indochina. The Soviet CCSA proposal [14] has no resonance. However, relations with Japan are not very positive. Apparently due to Soviet pressure, the Japanese are currently hesitant to sign an anti-hegemony clause in the intended peace and friendship treaty[15]. With regards to India, there are prospects for an improvement of relations.

Concerning the situation of the global economy, Deng just referred to Chinese statements before the United Nations. Existing contradictions would be a result of the laws of capitalism. China, however, would favor the Conference of 27.[16] It is viewing dialogue and cooperation as the only way to solve the problems.

On the German question Deng said verbatim: "We support the reunification of Germany". The German question cannot be viewed different than questions of Vietnam's, Korea's, and China's (Taiwan!) reunification. Maybe these questions cannot be resolved in five or ten years, but possibly in a hundred years.

In a short statement the Federal Chancellor stated that the Chinese statements warrant more exact analysis. There is no unanimous consent between our explanations and the Chinese statements. Given the shortage of time, he wants to limit himself to the following comments:

- 1) He mostly agrees with the military parts. He believes in particular, that the issue of a war between China and the Soviet Union is correctly assessed. However, he also has to note that the option of a war between socialist states has also changed the situation for us.

- 2) He wants to make a political comment on the war issue: Whoever will trigger a world war will also evoke incalculable risks for himself. This applies to both cases of a nuclear as well as a conventional war. The Federal Republic of Germany is making its contribution to minimize the risk of a war. The [West German] Federal Army is rated

highly not just by our friends.

3) On the European issue the chancellor remarked that the Federal Army is making a contribution to the defense of Europe. The European defense capabilities represent an important contribution to the establishment of a global balance of forces. Besides, the Federal Republic of Germany has already furthered European unity at a time when differences in opinion between Beijing and Moscow had not yet existed.

4) Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping had wanted to reaffirm our concerns over the Soviet Union. However, we did not have to be reaffirmed in those concerns as it was the Soviet Union who has divided our country. The Soviet leaders would also be concerned about China. With regard to Europe, he [Schmidt] would have no fear, though, because Mao is right: In the end, the defender is always winning.

5) Due to its experiences with the Soviet Union over decades, the Chinese Communist Party certainly does understand the Soviet Union better than we do. However, China should also know more about Europe and America. This is why he had invited Deng. [17] Also, a visit to the United States would provide better opportunities for assessment. Therefore China should have more frequent contacts with the United States. Ford and Kissinger are strong personalities who are able to withstand criticism. He, the Federal Chancellor himself, would have criticized Ford in the U.S. [18] and the Soviet leadership on Soviet television[19], without both having any negative impact on relations.

6) He thanked Deng for his emphasis on global economic dialogue instead of a policy of confrontation. Reasons for the current crisis would not rest with the capitalist economic order, though; countries with different systems - feudal systems, both rightist and leftist dictators - are also affected by the crisis.

7) He thanked the Chinese side for its clear advocacy for German reunification and European unity. He would look forward to a visit by Deputy Prime Minister Deng to Europe, because only now we have established foundations for a true dialogue.

Deputy Prime Minister Deng thanked for the very frank exchange of mutual positions, and he expressed his desire to continue with these conversations. He asked for considering contents of the talks as confidential and not to publish them in the press. [20]

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[1] Copy. The memorandum of conversation was drafted by VLR I Hellbeck.

[2] Attached to the memorandum. Participants from the People's Republic of China were, in addition to Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping: Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua; Transportation Minister Yeh Fei; the Ambassador in Bonn, Wang Shu; Deputy Department Head Europe from the Foreign Ministry, Hsü Wie-chin; and the Deputy Chief of Protocol, Kao Chien-chung. From the Federal Republic participated, in addition to Federal Chancellor Schmidt: Federal Minister [for Transportation, Post and Telecommunications Kurt] Gscheidle; Minister of State [in the Foreign Ministry Karl] Moersch; Parliamentary State Secretary [in the Federal Chancellery Marie] Schlei; State Secretary [Klaus] Bölling, [Federal Government] Agency for Press and Information; Ambassador [Rolf] Pauls, Beijing; Department Heads [in the Federal Chancellery] Hiss and Sanne; [Foreign Ministry] Section Head Fischer; [Embassy] Counselor Berendonck, and [Foreign Ministry] VLR I Hellbeck. See Section 010, Vol. 178653.

[3] For the conversation between Federal Chancellor Schmidt and the Chairman of the Central Committee and the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao

Zedong, on October 30, 1975 in Beijing see [AAPD] document 323.

[4] For the text of the treaty to ban nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in space, and under the sea from August 5, 1963 see Bundesgesetzblatt 1964, Part I, p. 907-910.

[5] On May 26, 1972 the Secretary General of the CPSU Central Committee, Brezhnev, and President Nixon signed a treaty about limitations of anti-ballistic missile systems (ABM Treaty) and an interim agreement on measures of limitations of strategic arms (SALT I) through a protocol. For the text see UNTS, Vol. 944M, p. 4-26. For the German text see Europa-Archiv 1972, D 392-398. See also the signed and unilateral interpretations of the treaties; Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 67 (1972), p. 11-143. For the German text see Europa-Archiv 1972, D 398-404.

[6] For the American-Soviet SALT agreements of November 23 and 24, 1974 see document 2, footnote 6.

[7] On the stay of American Secretary of State Kissinger in Beijing from October 19 to 23, 1975 see document 324, footnote 7.

[8] American Secretary of State Kissinger visited Tokyo on October 18 and 19, 1975 and again on October 23, 1975.

[9] Already on September 20, 1960 the member of the Politburo of the CCP Central Committee, Deng Xiaoping, stated to a delegation of the CPSU that the proposal by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Khrushchev, to establish a joint Pacific naval command would mean to cede the entire Chinese coast to the USSR. See the excerpt from the short protocol, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, No. 10, p. 173. On Soviet efforts towards closer military cooperation with the People's Republic of China and, among else, a joint Pacific naval command see also Khrushchev Remembers [Chruschtschow erinnert sich], p. 473f.

[10] On the ideological conflict between the USSR and the People's Republic of China see document 323, footnote 2.

[11] On September 29, 1939 Prime Minister Chamberlain, Prime Minister Daladier, the "Führer and Reich Chancellor" Hitler, and the Prime Minister and President of the "Grand Council of Fascism" in the Kingdom of Italy, Mussolini, signed the Munich Agreement. For its text see ADAP, D, II, document 675.

[12] The CSCE final meeting was held from July 30 to August 1, 1975 in Helsinki.

[13] Between May 13 and 26, 1940 German forces encircled near the Northern French city of Dunkirk allied troops, mostly British soldiers. Between May 27 and June 4, 1940, about 338,000 soldiers succeeded in fleeing on ships to Great Britain while leaving their weaponry and equipment behind.

[14] On June 7, 1969 the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Brezhnev, proposed for the first time, at the Third World Conference of the Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow, to establish a system of collective security in Asia. For its text see Neues Deutschland, June 8, 1969, p. 6. On January 10, 1975 [West German] Ambassador [Ulrich] Sahm reported from Moscow: "The current status of discussion about a Conference for Collective Security in Asia is apparently viewed as unsatisfactory also by the Soviets. Only Mongolia does support the Soviet proposal without reservations. The qualified words of agreement by Iran and Afghanistan come close to actually supporting Beijing, since they are linked to the requirement for all Asian states to participate. The other Asian countries have been evasive (like India) or came out openly against." The Soviet position would include new aspects and now "the earlier emphasis on the CSSA as having also the function to contain expansionist China [...] has receded behind the anti-imperialist mission (concerted action between socialist and Third World states), but still: "One has to assume that, those tactical adaptations notwithstanding, the main goal of Soviet CSSA policy still consists in the establishment of a political system (if possible, with a security policy component) to contain China in Asia." See telex report No. 121; Subdivision 30, Vol. 101472.

[15] On the status of negotiations about a Chinese-Japanese friendship and peace treaty see document 324, footnote 9.

[16] Corrected from "25". On the conference about international economic cooperation between December 16 and 19, 1975 in Paris, for which the number of 27 participants had been agreed upon, see document 367, footnote 11 and 12.

[17] On the invitation of Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping to a visit to the Federal Republic see document 322, footnote 3.

[18] On statements by Federal Chancellor Schmidt during his visit to the United States between October 1 and 4, 1975 see document 294, footnote 5.

[19] For the text of the interview by Federal Chancellor Schmidt with Soviet television on October 26, 1974 see Bulletin 1974, p. 1269-1272.

[20] Ambassador Pauls, Beijing, transmitted on November 11, 1975 an assessment of the visit by Federal Chancellor Schmidt to the People's Republic of China, which had received great attention in the Chinese media: "Longstanding foreign observers, including representatives from states which [text missing]