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Summary:

A report on the GDR's foreign relations with countries such as Cambodia, Iraq, and Sudan, as well as with West Germany.

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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China
Beijing, 27 June 1969

Note

about a Conversation of the Ambassador of the GDR in the PR China,
Comrade Hertzfeldt[1], with the
Head of Main Department in the Foreign Ministry of the PR China,
Yu Zhan,
on 2 June 1969 between 11:00 and 12:00 hours
in the Foreign Ministry of the PR China

The Ambassador of the GDR had requested a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PR China in order to inform him about important developments concerning relations of the GDR with third countries and resulting consequences. The Chinese Foreign Ministry facilitated a meeting with Main Department Head Yu Zhan, arguing that the Minister is sick and his deputy is very busy.

At the beginning, Ambassador Hertzfeldt remarked that unfortunately the Minister is sick and his deputy is very busy. Therefore he requests to forward the following information to the Minister in charge.

First, Ambassador Hertzfeldt related the facts about the development of relations of the GDR with Iraq, Cambodia, and Sudan. He continued with references to the praise of GDR policies by representatives from those countries at the occasion [of establishing diplomatic relations]. He discussed the presumption of Bonn's claim to solely represent [Germany], and of the Hallstein Doctrine[2] whose untenability has been again proven - before he talked about the West German threats and blackmail attempts against those states mentioned. In this context, he also informed about the visit by the Cambodian Foreign Minister to Berlin. He judged the steps from the three above mentioned states as representing a severe blow against imperialism, especially that of West Germany, and as an important contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle. Then he emphasized how he had noticed with surprise that not even the basic facts were reported in the Chinese press among other statements. This, although the Chinese side had told him multiple times to support the GDR against the policy of West German imperialism. He expressed how it would be good and helpful to support the GDR, but also the three states above subject to imperialist blackmailing attempts, through according statements to juxtapose imperialist propaganda with a different position to be presented to the global public.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt then informed about the so-called working week of the West German federal parliament between 2nd and 4th of June in West Berlin. It again has the objective to demonstrate in a provocative manner an alleged affiliation of West Berlin with West Germany. It is in particularly directed against the constructive program for European security drafted by the member states of the Warsaw Treaty. In this context, he [Hertzfeldt] called for a respective action by the PR China in an appropriate form.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt then referenced a Xinhua article from 22 May 1969 about Kiesinger's[3] visit to Japan. He noted this publication does contain some aspects that match our [GDR] positions:

1. West Germany and Japan, the former fascist powers during the period of World War

II, have today become danger spots for a new war under the leadership of U.S. imperialism.

2. Kiesinger, an old Nazi, is like Sato^[4] afraid by the struggle of the peoples. This is why both undertake attempts of a more coordinated penetration into the countries of Asia. (The Ambassador referred to articles from the West German press that talked about a new phase of activation of Japanese imperialism in Asia).

3. The agreed Foreign Minister consultations serve the purpose of a further development of cooperation between both countries in light of their imperialist policy.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt added that we still see another important aspect that was not considered in the Xinhua article. West German articles have clearly said that Kiesinger's visit also served the purpose to conspire jointly with Japan against the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, because these "heirs of the fascist axis powers and new war hotspots" -as they have been correctly called by Xinhua- want to leave the door to nuclear weapons open for themselves in the interest of their aggressive policy.

At the end, the Ambassador raised two questions:

1. Meanwhile the first Ambassadors of the PR China have been withdrawn again. He is interested to hear when an Ambassador of the PR China is to be expected in Berlin.

2. He wants to use the opportunity to reiterate again our requests for meetings with leading personalities of the PR China. Ambassadors accredited later than himself [Hertzfeldt] had already had opportunities for such meetings, for instance with the Prime Minister [Chou Enlai]. He is again asking for support in realizing such visits he had requested.

Following these remarks, Yu Zhan inquired:

1. What will the GDR do to counter the West German pressure on Cambodia, Sudan, and Iraq?

2. Which measures does the GDR want to take against the recent West German provocations in West Berlin?

In his reply, Comrade Hertzfeldt referred to the statement by the [GDR] Foreign Ministry from 30 May 1969 and to the consequent struggle by the GDR against these West German provocations.

In its relations with Iraq, Cambodia, and Sudan, the government of the GDR is advocating a further increase in cooperation, also in economic terms, and comprehensive friendly relations in order to counter imperialist pressure and potential imperialist measures. In this regard the GDR is assured of the support of its [socialist] allies.

In response, Head of the Main Department Yu stated that he will forward the information presented to him today to the leadership of the [Chinese] Foreign Ministry. However, he wants to express his personal opinions in this meeting already. The Chinese government and the Chinese people are permanently supporting the struggles of the people of the GDR against West German militarism, U.S. imperialism, and they support the position of the GDR on the West Berlin question. [China] is welcoming the penetration of the Hallstein Doctrine. However, the organs of the press

will not express this at every occasion. Ambassador Hertzfeldt says he is surprised about the lack of articles in the Chinese press on most recent developments in foreign relations of the GDR. Yet there is nothing to be surprised about here. The press has its own rules.

The PR China is maintaining friendly relations with Cambodia, Iraq, and Sudan. It is cooperating with them in a friendly manner and is providing them with economic support. This way it is also supporting those countries against imperialist interference, regardless whether it is coming from the USA or the West German side. This Chinese policy towards those states is at the same time a support for the policy of the GDR.

As far as the West Berlin question is concerned, China has a clear stance against any West German claim to West Berlin. However, if the GDR would counter the West German attempts to annex West Berlin with more decisive measures, and not sometimes display certain vacillations on this issue, the PR China for its part could grant even more support. Otherwise, however, this is somewhat difficult for the PR China. Really decisive measures by the GDR against West Germany would always be met with support by the PR China.

Yu Zhan continued that the delegation of Ambassadors is proceeding gradually and has just begun. No decision has been made yet about the delegation of an Ambassador of the PR China to Berlin. He will inform when this might happen to be the case.

As far as the meeting requests of Ambassador Hertzfeldt are concerned, Main Department Head Yu stated that for instance the Prime Minister is currently very busy. He has received some Ambassadors so far, but others he has not. This is occurring according to concrete needs.

Furthermore, Yu Zhan declares that support is actually a mutual affair. Although China is following a principled policy, it does not make its support for the GDR contingent of the support for China by the GDR. The foreign policy of the PR China is constantly directed against the imperialist war and aggression policy under the leadership of U.S. imperialism. It is also directed against West German and Japanese imperialism. For that reason, for instance, the Chinese side has also made a statement on the Kiesinger visit to Japan without a previous prompt from the GDR. Unfortunately, however, the GDR is granting China not much support. To the contrary, frequently the GDR argues against the PR China without a reason. For instance, one is talking entirely without reason about an axis Bonn-Beijing. Yet the PR China does not have diplomatic reactions with West Germany though Bonn very much desires them! China has just some economic and trade relations with West Germany, but they are not even based on a trade agreement. What would therefore be reasons in favor of talking about an axis Bonn - Beijing, to spread rumors about an upcoming establishment of diplomatic relations respectively the existence of contacts, or finally talk about Beijing doing a pact with Bonn? Although Ambassador Hertzfeldt himself had said to [Deputy Foreign] Minister Qiao Guanhua he does not believe in an "axis" Bonn - Beijing, GDR press publications continue to talk about it.

Another issue where the GDR doesn't support the PR China concerns the statement by the government of the PR China regarding border disputes with the Soviet Union. For example, the GDR has rejected the mentioned government declaration what even the Soviet Union had not done. Also, the GDR has not published this statement in its press.

In conclusion, Yu declared that those issues mentioned are just two examples and both are very regrettable.

In his reply, Comrade Ambassador Hertzfeldt said the GDR is welcoming any support for the struggle against the Hallstein Doctrine. He called it positive that China is giving support to countries like Cambodia, Iraq, and Sudan what contributes to resisting imperialist pressure. Though he underlined again that substantial support would consist in public statements about those questions.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt declared that one issue raised by Yu deserves a determined rejoinder: It is obvious to everyone that the GDR position on the West Berlin question has never oscillated. For meanwhile 21 years, since the division of Berlin by the imperialists, the GDR position towards West Berlin is clear and unequivocal: West Berlin is an independent political entity that is not part of West Germany. Without becoming impressed by whatever imperialist maneuvers or imperialist propaganda, the GDR has reliably protected and took under control its state border with West Berlin. Several border guards have sacrificed their lives in defense against attacks and provocations against the state border. In order to reject Bonn's policy of annexation towards West Berlin, the GDR has continuously undertaken necessary and appropriate measures, like transit travel bans against members of the neo-Nazi party, Bonn Ministers and others, as well as transit bans of military goods produced in West Berlin and other things. The imperialists are certainly aware of the consequent GDR position on these issues.

There are mostly Western press products writing about an axis Bonn - Beijing. Comrade Ambassador Hertzfeldt said that Yu Zhan's quote of his respective reply to Minister Qiao Guanhua was not accurate. He provided a correction through an exact repetition of his then answer: He does not want to argue with the Minister about terms like "axis". However, it is fact that the global press is reporting and, possibly, also speculating a lot about relations und contacts between Beijing and Bonn. Thus it would be a good thing to talk for once openly about this issue.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt explained further it is a fact that leading representative of the Bonn government like Strauß^[5] are demanding you have to keep the Soviet Union busy and on edge in the East in order to render it paralyzed in the West. This does affect vital interests of the GDR. The Head of the Main Department is aware how already last year the Chinese side was admonished by [then GDR] Ambassador Bierbach^[6] to publicly refute Western statements where, among else, it was stated that West German policy towards China should follow the slogan "The Enemy of my Enemy is my Friend". Yet nothing happened in this regard. It would be good if the Chinese side would publicly and clearly reject all potential speculations about an "axis", and about contacts with Bonn et cetera.

As far as the PR China's government declaration on border issues is concerned, Ambassador Hertzfeldt explained that in his opinion content and form of this statement is hardly appropriate to resolve such a problem constructively. Calling the European socialist countries colonies of the Soviet Union, as well as other qualifications in this declaration that directly affect the policy of the GDR government, is hurtful and insulting to the GDR. This is the reason for returning this government declaration to sender by the Embassy of the GDR in the PR China. Concerning the question of reciprocity of support raised by Yu Zhan, Ambassador Hertzfeldt responded that the GDR is even advocating, beyond the desire for mutual support, coordinated and united action by all socialist countries and progressive forces against imperialism. For example, such would be especially needed to support the Vietnamese people. The GDR is anyway ready to do everything in its power to contribute to this united kind of action.

Main Department Head Yu Zhan replied that problems will become only bigger with the progress of this conversation. For example, the Ambassador has a different opinion than the statement by the government of the PR China. He (Yu) also has a different opinion on some information given by the Ambassador. But he had listened patiently to his statements and will also forward them [to his superiors]. However, the

Embassy of the GDR should do the same with the Chinese position, for instance regarding the government declaration. We [the GDR Embassy] would go further than the Soviet Union which received the declaration [and did not return it]. China is forcing on no one to accept its opinion, but it is talking in the language of facts and therefore is correct.

Moving on to Ambassador Hertzfeldt's remarks about the West German policy towards China, Yu Zhan declared that the imperialists and West German politicians are talking a lot, and we do not have the time to address all that. Yet the statements by the Ambassador have addressed one essential question. The PR China is not responsible for the current situation at the Chinese-Soviet border. All those incidents had been staged by the Soviet side. The Soviet Union hardly belongs to those countries that fight against imperialism, but it has itself become an imperialist country. The Soviet Union is not an enemy but a friend of the United States. It is acting against China jointly with the United States. Therefore it is ridiculous to talk about joint Chinese actions with the Soviet Union against the United States. But this is showing again how the GDR is following the Soviet Union. For this reason we have basic, irresolvable differences of opinion.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt responded that differences in opinion on these issues are a matter of principles and there will be apparently no agreement reached during this meeting. He clearly rejected the slander of the Soviet Union and emphasized how, since the October Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Union is for us until today the bulwark of the struggle against imperialism and for social progress all over the world. For that reason we have fraternal ties with the Soviet Union, and we are allies in the very sense of international law. In our opinions we clearly let ourselves be guided by the facts. The principled anti-imperialist stance of the Soviet Union is continuously becoming evident to us citizens of the GDR through the consequent support of the GDR by the Soviet Union in our complicated anti-imperialist struggle.

Ambassador Hertzfeldt stated again how, in light of the many utterances by West German politicians on policy of West Germany towards China, it would be highly useful to openly counter these statements from the side of the Chinese government.

In response, Yu Zhan stated that the Soviet Union does not conduct a struggle against West Germany, but against the East, against the PR China; and now it is also doing so by military means.

Comrade Ambassador Hertzfeldt rejected these statements and stressed his conviction that the Soviet Union would be happy to have normal and even friendly relations with the PR China. The GDR would anyway welcome reasonable negotiations as proposed by the Soviet government - after actually such problems had to occur in first place.

Yu Zhan retorted: You are for negotiations and have returned our statement to sender?!

Ambassador Hertzfeldt replied the statement had not been resent for containing the term "negotiations" but for the reasons mentioned above.

The conversation was ended with some final mutual remarks, and the reiterated conclusion to have principled differences in opinion.

Note: Despite its confrontational content, the meeting proceeded in a calm manner.

(According to notes of the participants)

Signed
[Gustav] Hertzfeldt

CC:

1. 2x [GDR Foreign Ministry] Far Eastern [Department]
2. 1x Information
3. 1x Embassy [Beijing]

[\[1\]](#) Gustav Hertzfeldt (1926-2005), GDR Ambassador to the PR China 1969-1973.

[\[2\]](#) Named after West German State Secretary Walter Hallstein (1901-1982), this was a key principle in the foreign policy of the FRG from 1955 to 1970. It prescribed that the Federal Republic would not establish diplomatic relations with any state that recognized the GDR and sever diplomatic relations with those states that dared to recognize it.

[\[3\]](#) Kurt Georg Kiesinger (1904-1988), Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany 1966-1969.

[\[4\]](#) Eisaku Sato (1901-1975), Prime Minister of Japan 1964-1972.

[\[5\]](#) Franz-Josef Strauß (1915-1988), 1956-1962 Minister of Defence and 1966-1969 Minister of Finance of the Federal Republic of Germany.

[\[6\]](#) Martin Bierbach (1926-1984), GDR Ambassador to the PR China 1966-1969.