

November 20, 1968

Telegram Number 2206/09, 'NATO Ministerial Council'

Citation:

"Telegram Number 2206/09, 'NATO Ministerial Council'", November 20, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France. Obtained by Enrico Fardella and translated by Garret Martin.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116448>

Summary:

French diplomat Lucien Paye assesses Chinese foreign policy in the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and speculates that China wishes to exploit differences within the NATO camp.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

French

Contents:

Translation - English

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Beijing, 20th November 1968
Received on 21stat 11h03

Telegram number 2206/09

NATO Ministerial Council

From the recent NATO conference, China only wants to focus on the growing opposition between the United States and its allies. Using the 'fears and malaise that the invasion of Czechoslovakia caused in Western Europe', Washington is trying to restore its hegemony on the Alliance and is demanding a greater military contribution from its partners. Yet, France wants to preserve its military independence, 'which profoundly irritates the Americans'. Canada is threatening to withdraw from NATO in 1969 if the United States maintains its demands. Finally, West Germany and Great Britain are worried by the effects of Soviet-American collaboration.

It is futile to spend a great time on the conventional aspects of this analysis. By trying to reveal the 'contradictions' of the Atlantic Alliance, Beijing is mostly revealing its own: if the occupation of Prague contributed to the 'disintegration of an aggressive bloc', why are they condemning the Soviet initiative?

The article still seems to be of interest for two reasons:

1. Beijing is adopting, it seems to me, a comprehensive attitude in regard to the reactions in Western Europe sparked off by the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The analysis of the French and Canadian positions is objective and lacks any unpleasant comment.
2. Chinese propaganda has slowly replaced the usual formula of 'collusion and rivalry' with 'Soviet-American collusion'. So they are hinting that there are contradictions between the two 'imperialisms' that can be exploited. The use of this new formula is certainly not a coincidence and will be duly noted by my Soviet colleagues.

Signed Lucien Paye