

November 5, 1969

Note Number 969 from M. Jacques Roux to Maurice Schumann, 'Divided Countries: Germany and China'

Citation:

"Note Number 969 from M. Jacques Roux to Maurice Schumann, 'Divided Countries: Germany and China'", November 5, 1969, 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/116457>

Summary:

M. Jacques Roux describes and compares West German-East German relations and China-Taiwan relations, reporting that, as Beijing opens up with Western countries, it is concurrently demanding that they break relations with Taipei.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

French

Contents:

Translation - English

Bern, 5 November 1969

Note number 969

M. Jacques Roux
French Ambassador in Switzerland

to

His Excellency Maurice Schumann
Foreign Minister
Asia Department

Divided Countries: Germany and China

The declarations of the new West German chancellor in regard to the German Democratic Republic have attracted the attention of the Federal Political Department. The latter believes that Bonn is following a path that will lead it, sooner or later, to a sort of de facto recognition of the Pankow regime. Swiss diplomats are already drawing certain consequences in the economic domain from this open policy, and are wondering about a possible extension of this expected and welcome normalization of relations between the two Germanies to Asia, and the two Chinas.

The Department knows that industrial groups in Zurich have been trying for years to increase business ties with the Eastern countries, and first and foremost with the German Democratic Republic. But these exchanges are impeded, on this end, by the absence of official relations between Bern and Pankow, as well as by the strong hostility of Swiss public opinion, especially in the German cantons, towards the regime of President Ulbricht. Nevertheless, exporters had been able to use the Swiss delegation in Berlin as a starting point for their trips and contacts with their East-German clients. But they would have liked to enjoy more leeway, and in particular that representatives of the East German economic departments be able to travel more easily in Switzerland.

Thanks to a patient but firm approach, the Zurich Chamber of Commerce had managed, in early 1968, to convince the Federal Government to accept the idea of opening a commercial section for the company in either East Berlin or in Pankow. The events in Czechoslovakia prevented the implementation of this project, which was not however abandoned by the Zurich business community. The latter did not interrupt its ties with its East German clients and constantly badgers the consular services of the Federal Political Department so that they show more understanding when attributing visas to civil servants from Pankow.

If Bonn pursues an open policy towards Pankow, Switzerland, we are told in Bern, could move its trade relations with the GDR away from its current semi clandestineness, and justify that evolution to its public opinion by referring to that initiated by M. Brandt.

The extensions to Asia that the Federal Political Department draws from this new policy from Bonn are only speculations, but they deserve to be noted as they are evidence of the patient and documented approach that Swiss diplomats bring to the study of international affairs.

According to some civil servants of the Federal Political Department, if Brandt's initiatives lead to recognition of the existence of East Germany, this would create a

precedent that could help solve the problem posed by Taiwan and Mainland China.

The Swiss note, with a certain apprehension, that the People 's Republic of China is proving more demanding than in the past vis-à-vis countries that want to recognize its regime. They seem to believe that two preconditions were imposed to Italy and Canada: first, a break with Taipei, and second the formal recognition, in an official declaration, of the 'historical and inalienable rights' of China over Taiwan. The Federal Political Department blames this latter precondition for the current difficulties faced by the negotiations led by Ottawa and Rome with Beijing.

A member of the East Section of the Federal Political Department even confided to one of my collaborators that the Federal government was worried that it might be asked by the Chinese government, in coming months, to sign on to a similar declaration. He hinted that his administration wanted to know whether we had been asked to take such a step.

A modus vivendi with two coexisting German states with whom the members of the international community could freely establish relations in ways that they would judge appropriate could, they believe in Bern, not only create a precedent, but also put a brake on the real or alleged demands of Communist China.

I leave to our Swiss interlocutors the responsibility for this rapprochement, which depends more on a diplomatic perspective. I would be grateful if the Asia Department could pass on the information that it might possess, so that I can transmit it to my Swiss interlocutors, on the preconditions that the Beijing government now imposes to the Western countries that want to establish mutual diplomatic relations.

In our case, I do not remember Beijing demanding anything else in 1964, other than the recall of our mission in Taipei, before exchanging ambassadors. If this is not correct, or if the Chinese had since then made a demand for a similar declaration than the one mentioned above, I would like to be able to mention that to my interlocutors at the Federal Political Department.