

Soviet attitudes — West Berlin, the European Communities and China (Brussels, 15 May 1979)

Caption: On 15 May 1979, Christopher Audland, Deputy Secretary-General of the Commission of the European Communities, sends a note to Sir Roy Denman, Director-General for External Affairs of the Commission of the European Communities, regarding his recent visit to Berlin and more particularly his discussion on 12 May 1979 with Bronislav P. Khotulev, one of the Ministers in the Soviet Embassy, concerning East–West relations, the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, the powers of the European Parliament and EEC–China relations.

Source: Commission of the European Communities. Personal and confidential. Note for the attention of Sir Roy Denman. Soviet attitudes – West Berlin, the European Communities and China, Historical Archives of the European Union 2013, Villa Salviati – via Bolognese 156, I-50139 Firenze – Italy, EN - Conférence sur la sécurité et la coopération en Europe 1970-1983, EN – 1991, 15.05.1979. 4 p. http://www.eui.eu/haeu_er/er/pdf/EN/18/01/EN-1991.pdf.

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COMMISSION
OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Secretariat-General

Brussels, 15 May 1979

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF SIR ROY DENMAN

Subject : Soviet attitudes - West Berlin, the European Communities and China

1. I am sending you a copy of a general note I have made about a recent visit to Berlin, in which I mention having talked informally to a senior Soviet official.

2. The official in question is M. Khotulev, one of the two Ministers in the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin. He is a very old German hand, having spent more than sixteen years of his career in East Berlin. He is particularly close to Ambassador Abrassimov. When the latter left for the Soviet Embassy in Paris after the Four-Power talks, M. Khotulev returned to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. But, when Abrassimov came back, he summoned Khotulev to join him in the Embassy. All this being so, Khotulev is generally well-informed about East/West relations.

3. During the Four-Power talks, Khotulev was No. 3 in the Soviet team, and I got to know him well. He talks very freely with me, and I would like this to continue. To protect my contact, I have not even given his name in my general note. But, in view of your numerous and complex negotiations with Eastern Europe, I think you might find it useful to have a more detailed account of what Khotulev said. I would be grateful if you could treat the information with maximum discretion.

4. My conversation with Khotulev took place at a fairly convivial "old boys' reunion lunch". I was the host. The only other guest was Nigel Broomfield, who is now the Political Adviser to the British Military Government. He too was involved in the Berlin talks and knows Khotulev. He also has extensive East/West experience of other kinds, having formerly been an officer in the British Military Mission in the Soviet zone and having also been Head of Chancery in the British Embassy in Moscow. I asked him to make a record of our conversation, of which

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I now attach a copy.



C. J. AUDLAND

Deputy Secretary-General

Enc.

cc. M. Kawan

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SUMMARY OF POINTS MADE OVER LUNCH ON 12 MAY

Quadripartite Agreement

1. Mr Audland said that when we signed the QA, some in the west had doubts, now almost all agreed that it has in fact gone well. Khotulev agreed. The QA had worked well and until now been applied fairly by both sides. The atmosphere around the city was now completely different. "Our" Germans were also content with it.

2.

Elections to the European Parliament

2. Khotulev said that what the west had in mind struck at the central point of the QA. It was a serious breach (eine grobe Verletzung). He had been looking through the relevant Federal legislation recently and had noted that the names of the German representatives to the European Parliament would be notified by means of a letter from the President of the Bundestag to the President of the European Parliament. No distinction would be made in that letter between the Berlin representatives and the Federal representatives. This was a clear example of how the FRG was trying to make out that the Western Sectors of Berlin were an integral part of the FRG. This was a political issue.

Mr Audland replied that Khotulev would no doubt remember the long discussions that had taken place over the definition of the "existing situation". Part of that existing situation was that the Treaty of Rome was being applied to Berlin. The Soviet side had clearly recognised this, in discussion, despite their earlier objections. Khotulev agreed but maintained that direct elections were not part of that situation. Mr Audland pointed out that the Treaty of Rome inter alia required elections to the European Parliament. If the FRG had been trying to make out that the WSB were an integral part of the Federation they could have proposed direct voting in the WSB. But they did not. The Berlin representatives would be chosen by a quite different procedure. There was thus a sharp distinction being made between them and those of the FRG. As far as notification procedures were concerned Mr Audland had not seen the Law: but were the procedures currently in force all that different from those

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now set out in the Law? This could be checked. Khotulev was non-committal. He maintained, however, that there would be another important change. The European Parliament would have more power. Mr Audland denied this. The Parliament to be elected on 10 June would have exactly the same powers as the existing Parliament.

Comment. Khotulev had obviously been doing some detailed research on the legislation and modalities connected with the elections. He saw the problem as a political one. He did not have a clear understanding of the powers and scope of a directly elected European Parliament and feared that it was going to develop new supra-national capabilities. That there might be groups in some of the member countries, like France or Britain, who would themselves vigorously oppose any extension of the Parliament's powers, appeared to strike him as a novel thought. If, however, it were the case that the FRG procedures for notification etc. for the elected Parliament were similar to those followed for the present Parliament, it might make a difference to the Soviet reaction or at any rate to Khotulev's assessment of the situation. At no time did he threaten violent action of any sort should the elections go ahead on the basis planned.

C/CMEA

3. Mr Audland remarked that the Community had recently received a letter from Katushev to the President of the Council of the EEC which had caused some surprise. It appeared to be going back on ground that had previously been settled between the two sides. Earlier it had been agreed that each side would respect the rules and practices of the other and would operate according to its own procedures. M. Haferkamp had been the Commission's chief negotiator. But the note by Katushev appeared to be an attempt to lay down who the participants on the EEC side should be. It had also made no direct comment on important proposals made by M. Haferkamp at the end of the last round of negotiations in Bucharest in November. What was the reason? Khotulev maintained that he did not know the details. The whole process was, however, very difficult for "us". We (undefined) wanted to come to an agreement but needed time to coordinate a position. It was

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comparatively easy for the EEC where the level of economic development was relatively uniform. But the divergence on the eastern side was very great, for example between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union. Equally Romania was claiming developing country status, which was rubbish. The competences on either side were also different.

Comment. It is almost certain that Khotulev had seen Katushev's letter. Although he suggested to the contrary this was inconsistent with his earlier remark that he was responsible, as one of the 2 Ministers in the Embassy, for following the whole range of the GDR's external relations. He seemed unhappy at having to defend a position in which the CMEA side appeared to be trying to lay down the internal arrangements on the EEC side. The counter argument was clearly very much in his mind.

China

4. This was raised by Khotulev with a request to know what the Chinese would get from the EEC. Mr Audland explained that a framework agreement had been signed. But it would take time to put flesh on the bones. The negative Soviet reaction to the recent improvement in relations between Europe and China had been noted. It seemed to us that the Soviet Union was over-sensitive to any move by others towards China apparently equating them with moves against the Soviet Union. Was this incorrect? Khotulev denied Soviet over-sensitivity. But he maintained the west was making a mistake. In the long term the west would discover that China was not so easy to deal with. Some in the west had been very content to see a war break out between two Communist countries, China and Vietnam. But communism had nothing to do with it. It was a national struggle which had been going on for centuries. None of "us" (by implication including the west) properly understood the oriental mind which could move in a different and alarming way.

Comment. Khotulev spoke more in sorrow than in anger. One had the impression that the Russians had concluded that the practical problems inherent in developing relations between the west and China were such that the process would be a slow one and run up against certain limits.