

NND 969031

By CLH Date 17 Apr 98

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

11

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MAR 21 1972

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 6-7, 1972

SUBJECT: US/UK Talks on Africa, March 6-7, 1972, Washington, D.C.--
Chinese Activities and Influence in Africa, Agenda Item 6b

PARTICIPANTS:

UK

Mr. Charles Martin Le Quesne,
Deputy Under Secretary, FCO
Mr. John Wilson, Head of West
Africa Dept., FCO
Mr. Michael Anthony McConville,
Assistant Head of Central
and Southern Africa Dept., FCO
Mr. Peter C. Petrie,
First Secretary, UKUN
Miss Margaret I. Rothwell, First
Secretary, British Embassy

US

Mr. David D. Newsom,
Assistant Secretary for
African Affairs
Mr. Samuel C. Adams, Jr.,
Assistant Administrator
for Africa, AID
Mr. Robert S. Smith, Deputy
Assistant Secretary for
African Economic Affairs
Mr. William Witman II, Acting
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for African Affairs
Mr. W. Marshall Wright,
National Security Council
Mr. Gordon R. Beyer,
National War College
Mr. Hal W. Pattison, Policy
Planning Staff,
(Rapporteur)
Mr. Thomas C. Thorne, Special Assistant,
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

POL AFR-CHICOM

COPIES TO:

AF (5) EUR S/PC
AF/RA (3) EUR/BMI All AF Diplomats Posts 57 Moscow
AF Directors 9 INR/RAF London Paris Hong Kong

INR-9

In opening the discussion, Mr. Newsom advised that it would be wise to keep in mind the Chinese Foreign Minister's statement to Secretary Rogers that the PRC's interest in Africa was primarily one of "revolution and turmoil." He noted, however, that this aim is obfuscated for the present by Chinese pursuit of traditional diplomacy through governments and existing institutions. China's policy can be characterized as opportunism based upon long-range estimates of developments, and includes the element of competition with the USSR. In West Africa the PRC is deemphasizing subversion in the interest of establishing diplomatic relations with existing governments and appears willing to use foreign aid here too as a means to achieve this end. It can be

2

(Drafting Office and Officer)
AF/PPS:HWPattison:slg
FORM DS-1254
2-65

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

NND 969031

By CH Date 17 Aug 98

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

expected that China will select "emphasis countries" in distributing its assistance. The Manantali Dam project in Mali may be an example of this, although there is nothing firm to date in spite of both governments' expressed interest. PRC aid in East Africa has totalled \$675 million (Ethiopia, Somalia, Zambia, Tanzania) and only four countries--Pakistan, Somalia, Tanzania and Zambia--have received two-thirds of all Chinese foreign aid funding.

Mr. Wilson represented the view of U.K. Sinologists that there has been a change only in Chinese tactics. The Chinese long ago cited Africa as the center of the struggle against imperialism, and the strategy based on their thesis of gaining control of the underdeveloped "countryside" of the world so as to isolate the industrialized "cities" remains unchanged. Mr. Newsom observed that it is through turmoil that the Chinese see the means of creating situations in which they are most likely to have a strong influence in African nations.

"Chairman Mao's revolutionary diplomatic policy" now aims at having relations with all states rather than close alliances only with radical states. The United Kingdom stresses the Chinese progress toward this goal in West Africa as the initial phase of their long-range strategy. Mr. Wilson foresees a future Chinese presence in West Africa resembling their current presence in East Africa--if they are successful in their efforts. Ambassador Le Quesne sees Nigeria as China's prime target in West Africa, but Mr. Wilson noted that the Nigerians have so far displayed commendable caution in their dealings with the PRC. In response to Mr. Newsom's observation that the Chinese had an advantage in being able to respond quickly to African requests for assistance, whereas we were inhibited in our responses by numerous restrictions and regulations; Mr. Wilson noted that the Chinese were notably successful in keeping control of their aid projects and in avoiding outright budgetary support which would give the Africans direct control of Chinese resources.

Ambassador Le Quesne stressed the British view that the Chinese are presently in the period of deployment in Africa and that it is difficult to foresee precisely their next move. In response to Mr. Smith's question, he offered the opinion that China's aims were primarily at present political: the establishment of political influence through economic measures in order eventually to deny areas and their resources to the West and place them at China's disposal.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NND 969031

By CLH Date 12 Aug 98

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3

Mr. Wright asked rhetorically if the Chinese were not now at the stage of rethinking their goals. He noted that they had been successful in achieving U.N. membership, internal respectability, etc., and with such greatly widened opportunities they are going to have to think now in terms of priorities. Previously, with a mere handful of countries in which they were able to operate, they had little problem in finding resources for their undertakings. Ambassador Le Quesne concurred that China's short-term objectives had been achieved. He noted that whereas only one-tenth of the Soviet Union's foreign aid had been devoted to Africa, fully one-half of China's aid had gone to the continent. Mr. Wright viewed this comparison as misleading, for the Chinese had previously had little leeway in choosing recipients of its aid. Where else could it have gone if not to Africa? Mr. Newsom noted that more recent Chinese offers of aid (Sierra Leone and Ethiopia) had come just prior to the vote on U.N. membership, and the question was now how much new aid would actually be forthcoming.

Mr. Smith sees China's goal not as world hegemony, but as the building-up of China as a powerful industrial state--which makes her interest in Africa in economic terms similar to that of Japan. Mr. Petrie noted the Chinese effort to distinguish themselves from the Soviet Union; citing their non-vote on the Argentine Resolution on Namibia at the Addis Ababa UNSC meeting as being aimed at placing themselves in a position to be the residual beneficiary of the upheavals which they foresee in Africa's future.

In response to Mr. Newsom's query as to the implications of this for our policy direction, Ambassador Le Quesne emphasized that the Soviet threat in Africa has proven to have been much less formidable than we had expected a decade ago. Russian techniques have not been very successful, and have included many examples of outright ineptitude. The question is whether Chinese techniques are going to prove to be a greater threat, and Ambassador Le Quesne fears that they will be. Whereas the Soviet Union in African eyes is not dissimilar from the West--in that it too is essentially a white European industrial power and has in its activities in Africa largely dealt through existing governments in conventional ways; the Chinese have an entirely different image with which it is much easier for the Africans to identify--less

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NND 969031

By CLH Date 17 Aug 98

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

pretentious and ostentatious, more on the order of that of the Peace Corps. Ambassador Le Quesne sees little choice for us other than to continue as we are, while attempting to do things more effectively.

Mr. Wilson wondered if China still does intend to bring about revolution in African countries in general and not just in southern Africa, cannot we in some way convey this idea to the Africans so as to alert them to the danger? Ambassador Le Quesne fears that the Africans may make the mistake of thinking that they can deal with China on the same terms that they have dealt with the USSR. Mr. McConville noted that Portuguese colonial policy denies dissidence any recourse but to appeal to the Chinese for assistance. Ambassador Le Quesne observed however, that those Africans who have actually visited China find the Chinese much too somber and dour and readily admit that their style does not appeal to the African temperament. This may be so, cautioned Mr. Newsom, but the Africans may still find the Chinese' modest and efficient ways of doing business very much to their liking even if they do not favor the Chinese way of life. Ambassador Le Quesne also foresees difficulties for the Chinese inherent in their attempt to build themselves up as the champion of small countries opposed to big power hegemony, while at the same time striving to make China a great industrial power the equal of the United States and the USSR.

Mr. Wright expressed doubt that there was any cause for concern if the PRC was really providing solid economic assistance needed by the African countries. Ambassador Le Quesne, however, sees dangers, in that such assistance is based upon ulterior motives aimed at specific long-range political objectives inimical to the West. He noted that the Tanzam Railroad was undoubtedly aimed toward strengthening Chinese influence on the periphery of white-ruled Southern Africa--with the Republic of South Africa the ultimate objective. He again cited Nigeria as China's principle long range concern in West Africa. Mr. Wright stuck to his opinion that we had overly concerned ourselves with the Russian threat, and should avoid doing so over the Chinese threat; which prompted Ambassador Le Quesne to reiterate that China was only in the deployment phase at this time, and that we cannot complacently assure ourselves that Chinese techniques are to be the same and no more successful than those of the

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

NND 969031

By CLH Date 17 Aug 98

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

5

Russians. Mr. Smith cited the example of China's simultaneous aid to Ethiopia and Somalia as a situation which was bound to create a conflict for the Chinese and could not continue indefinitely; and Mr. Wright noted that the Chinese are handicapped by a rigidity arising from their zealous adherence to the dogma of Maoism--the true faith.

All that we can really attempt to do, Ambassador Le Quesne concluded, is to warn the Africans that they should deal with the Chinese with an even "longer spoon" than they use in dealing with the Russians. Mr. Newsom remarked that his recent contacts with the Zambians and Tanzanians indicate that they are beginning to worry about the Chinese presence: it is they who now frequently raise this subject in conversation. Mr. Newsom observed that we should not be too forward about this subject, but limit ourselves to appropriate responses when the Africans bring it up. There was unanimous agreement with Mr. McConville's observation that the Chinese were the world's most arrogant, racist, and ethnocentric people; but Mr. Newsom warned that we should not overlook African sympathy and appreciation for the sympathetic Chinese response to African concern and frustration over the southern African situation. Although our southern African policy places us in a very disadvantageous situation which the Chinese are bound to exploit to the fullest, Mr. Wright nevertheless expects the Africans to prove as monumentally ungrateful to the Chinese as they have been to others. Ambassador Le Quesne agreed that this might very well be correct, but Mr. Newsom did not agree that this would be the case in the southern African periphery. He also noted that, whereas we see the solution in a softening of repressive policies by South Africa and Portugal, these two countries tend to see the solution in terms of more of the same. It was agreed that this situation constitutes our gravest danger and challenge as long as the Chinese and the Africans appear to have a community of interest contrary to that of the West.

In turning to the subject of China and the United Nations, Ambassador Le Quesne wondered if "non-participation" was perhaps a new Chinese tactical ploy. Mr. Petrie feels that it is not--that it is merely a reflection of the fact that the Chinese have not yet had time to formulate their positions on some issues before the United Nations; to which Mr. Newsom added that they were possibly also evidencing a desire to disassociate themselves from policies and actions taken at the United Nations prior to their own arrival. Mr. Petrie

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

NND 969031

By CLH Date 17 Aug 98

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6

suggested that we should not be overly concerned about the overblown Chinese attacks on the West. He felt that such exaggerated and vitriolic harangues often backfired by creating sympathy rather than animosity in the General Assembly, and could very well lead to the abstentions which we often seek.

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005