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Feb 28

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.3

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

By RRS Date 1-6-98

PARTICIPANTS:

President Nixon  
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant  
to the President for National Security Affairs  
Winston Lord, NSC Staff

Prime Minister Chou En-lai  
Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of  
Foreign Affairs  
Chi Chao-chu, Interpreter  
T'ang Wen-sheng, Interpreter

PLACE:

The President's Sitting Room Ching  
Kiang Guest House, Shanghai

DATE AND TIME:

Monday, February 28, 1972, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

(There was some opening pleasantries on the activities of the previous night and observations on the city of Shanghai. Prime Minister Chou commented that Dr. Kissinger and Vice Minister Ch'iao had met again the previous night. President Nixon remarked that they had had an interesting talk and that Dr. Kissinger had said he was with the Vice Minister; however, maybe he was out on the town. Dr. Kissinger then told the Vice Minister that he had to protect him. Prime Minister Chou remarked that when he tried to call the Vice Minister and ask how the talks had gone, he found that he had already gone to bed and probably Dr. Kissinger had gone to bed also.

President Nixon then remarked that his room was very nice. Prime Minister Chou responded that this was the highest floor, although of course there was another dining room above it. President Nixon commented that he had woken up at 6:00 a.m. that morning and walked on his balcony and looked at the city. He remarked on the skyscrapers which he had not realized were in the city. Prime Minister Chou

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commented that the houses, streets and bridges in the city included old ones which went back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century, new ones in the twentieth century, and even some built after liberation. Before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Shanghai was only a small community and there weren't many buildings at that time.)

President Nixon: I appreciate the opportunity to impose on the Premier's time before taking off for Washington. There are a couple of points that I would like to make in confidence to him.

First, I would greatly appreciate it if he would extend my thanks to Chairman Mao for the talks we had and also for the great hospitality we have received. Particularly one of the things I would like the Prime Minister to tell Chairman Mao was that I will always take away memories of the Guest House in Hangchow where he has stayed.

Prime Minister Chou: Thank you very much for your kindness. I will certainly convey that.

President Nixon: I would like to send a letter to the Prime Minister. I would like to write a letter to Chairman Mao. How should we get them there?

Dr. Kissinger: We could give them to Huang Hua in New York, the secret channel.

President Nixon: I want to write a personal letter.

Dr. Kissinger: That's the secret channel, Mr. President. We have agreed not to tell anyone about the existence of this channel. We will keep Paris visible. No one knows about the secret channel except these people here.

Prime Minister Chou: Indeed.

President Nixon: I want the Prime Minister to know what my plans are when I return.

First it is obvious, of course, to the Prime Minister that what we have done this week is a very important beginning. But what we do from now on is even more important; otherwise, all progress we have made will

be destroyed. I want to be sure that we handle matters on our side with the discretion that the Prime Minister has handled matters on his side. I assured the Prime Minister and assured Chairman Mao that the talks we have had would be kept confidential. I want to reassure him on that point. We will not put the record of these meetings in any channel except our own office, what we call the Top Secret file. It will not go into the Pentagon papers file. (PM Chou nods.)

When I return I will make a brief statement at the airport. The next day I will have to meet with Legislative leaders, up to ten people. Then I will meet with the Cabinet. The meetings with the Legislative leaders and the Cabinet will be private, but whenever I meet with groups that large, I assume they leak, so I will be very discreet with them.

As a major example, the Prime Minister and I have talked with a great sense of confidence and discussed our relations which each of us has with the Soviet Union, India, and Japan. I want to assure the Prime Minister that under no circumstances will we embarrass him or his government, by implication or otherwise, that those subjects were discussed. I know the Prime Minister and I want to say that in the spirit of the communique we discussed relations between China and the United States, not at expense of third parties. We know what we discussed on these issues. The Prime Minister can be assured that while I will be pressed by the leaders and the newsmen on those subjects I will see that nothing comes out which will be embarrassing because I consider that part of our confidential agreement.

As the Prime Minister knows, I cannot control what the press may speculate with regard to our meetings, but we will take every precaution to knock down any stories that are inaccurate and that are in violation of our understanding.

Dr. Kissinger: I told the Vice Minister last evening, Mr. President, on your behalf in answer to a question, that we would do our best to maintain discipline in the principal departments, especially the State and Defense Departments, so that they do not put anything out that is wrong. We cannot avoid some reference to Japan and India, since they are in the communique.



But we will keep in the bounds of the communique and force the Departments to clear everything at the White House, as we have in the period since my visits. I think our Chinese friends will understand if occasionally discipline isn't total, but we will maintain it.

You (the President) told me to say that with the Vice Minister.

President Nixon: I was going to cover that point with the Prime Minister if you hadn't. And we, of course, must realize that we have some nations abroad and there are some political factions at home which take the line of some of the nations abroad, who will try to seize on any statement made by us or made here to demonstrate that the new relationship between China and the United States has broken. It is very important that we do all we can not to give them any ammunition for their guns which they have pointed at us.

On the other hand I am totally aware of the fact that on some issues like Vietnam and the African problems we discussed; the Prime Minister and his government, because its principles are different from ours, will take a different position from us, and we naturally expect that. The only wish that I would express would be that on both sides when we differ we could avoid personal references. If when the Government of People's Republic differs from the policy of the U.S., we can avoid personal references I believe that it would take care of the situation, don't you think, Henry?

Dr. Kissinger: Also the adjectives.

President Nixon: And keep the rhetoric cool. You have a position, in your country and in the whole socialist movement and the world, a position of principle which we, of course, expect you to maintain. We have a position on our side which is a different one. We will avoid giving any indication that either of us changed our principles. The only indication we will give is that we tried to find here common ground, and as time goes on, we will try to find more common ground. We recognize that between two major countries that have different systems there can never be all common ground.

And we will recognize -- and this is the last point and perhaps the most important point -- the enormous importance of not giving the Soviet Union any grounds to launch attacks of rhetoric against the People's Republic due to the fact that this meeting has occurred. I have noted very carefully the Prime Minister's remarks concerning how we should respond if the Soviet leaders do raise points, as we think they may on our relations with the People's Republic. The Prime Minister can be sure I will be meticulous and also will not violate any confidence and will do nothing to cause embarrassment to China as a result of our meetings. I would have to say, based on past performance, that we will probably have to expect a few verbal blasts from Moscow. We will not react, but most importantly we will not give any ammunition that will make the blasts get bigger if we can avoid it.

Prime Minister Chou: Thank you. I am very happy we had this opportunity just before you are leaving to frankly discuss some issues.

First of all, with regard to some things we have discussed secretly and in our secret meetings, that is not only regarding the questions of the Soviet Union, Japan and India but also things we have decided to do but not to say, we believe that we will maintain that secrecy and that what happened after the two visits Dr. Kissinger paid to China can serve as proof to that. And we believe it can continue in that way.

As for what we mean by secrecy, that does not mean that we have something unspeakable or that we are engaged in schemes or plots against third countries. On the contrary that cannot be done, and it is better not to speak about that. Because we wish to achieve better possibilities but at the same time we prepare against the worst possibilities. This is only a precaution against the worst possibility, while naturally the better possibility is the one which we are striving for.

History proves that it is better to adopt a serious policy toward the direction we are working for; that is better than talking lightly about these matters. It is not as foreign propaganda describes, secret agreements behind countries' backs.

President Nixon: What we have to do is hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

Prime Minister Chou: That's right.

The second point is that after the issuance of the joint communique both sides shall, of course, do our best not to harm the other side. But you have your difficulties and we have ours.

President Nixon: I know.

Prime Minister Chou: For instance, and as you have just now mentioned, you on your side will do your best to maintain agreements not only with the White House but also with the State Department and the Pentagon. But sometimes they may misfire, and this will give rise to speculation in the world. We can't refrain from refuting these. Of course, we will not direct these at the President personally but we will direct our comments at the one who misfired. You on your side must first take measures to deal with the misfiring; and, of course, that's better.

As for debates in Congress and news reports, we will deal with them in a different way. And also I have already agreed to Mr. President's proposal that leaders of both parties should come together, for that is better.

President Nixon: Mansfield and Scott.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes. Because that makes it easier then to combine them.

President Nixon: Remember what I said, that Mansfield of the other party keeps secrets better than Scott of my own party.

Dr. Kissinger: May the President say tomorrow that you have agreed in principle to their visit?

President Nixon: But we would not announce anything.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes.



President Nixon: Could they say it? If I mention it, Scott will say it.

Dr. Kissinger: We have to expect that they will then say this will happen.

President Nixon: Will that be alright?

Prime Minister Chou: Yes. Also, in view of fairness we welcome that proposal that they come at the same time because this matter will affect relations between our two countries.

Dr. Kissinger: Again -- because they will ask practical questions -- we can tell them that when we have an operating channel set up they can deal with your Ambassador in Paris. We won't tell them yet that Paris is in the channel. That gives us two or three weeks time.

Prime Minister Chou: Alright. Of course, as for the disputes in Congress and various public opinion and misunderstandings directed against us, we will, of course, rebuke them. That will also have to do with our public opinion.

President Nixon: Using Peking radio and newspaper.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes. And also regarding countries close to us, they have their own stands and view. First of all Vietnam. . .

President Nixon: And Albania on the left. (PM Chou laughs.)

Prime Minister Chou: . . . have their own points of view and positions. We cannot account for or dominate their points of view.

You understand and know that Albania opposed both Kosygin's visit and yours. They wish us to be isolated, but, on the other hand, they also believe we have great power. It is not their subjective wish, but they want objectively our isolation. Of course, this is only for your ears and we say this merely to explain the situation we are in. We have always held that all countries no matter what their size are equal, and we respect their view. We will not interfere publicly and definitely will not act as the Soviet Union is doing, in attempting to dominate the opinion of so-called fraternal countries. I have said a lot to you about this.



On the third side there will be slander from the Soviet Union and this will not only be occurring in the future. Since our July 15 announcement last year up to the present day their stand has never ceased. I believe in the future they will be even more virulent. I think your side also will reply, not just ours.

President Nixon: Oh yes.

Prime Minister Chou: You must also be prepared for that. We told you our position. You can tell them about our position.

Another important matter is that we still maintain the view, that I have repeated on many occasions, that if the war in Vietnam and the other two countries of Indochina does not stop, no matter what form it continues in, it will be impossible to relax tensions in the Far East. And we will be forced to continue aid to their just struggles. We have only an obligation to sympathize with them and support them. We do not have the right to interfere in their position nor put forward various stands. We have no right to negotiate for them. This I have said repeatedly. This our very serious stand.

Our hope is that in dealing with this question in the future you will see farther to the future. It can be said with certainty that if peace is really brought to that area then that area will become an area that is non-aligned. That also will be beneficial not only for easing tensions in the Far East but also in the world. Only in this way will it be possible for the U.S. to realize some common points that we have realized together.

President Nixon: It would also help the direction on Taiwan.

Prime Minister Chou: But Mr. President also understands that we would rather let the question of Taiwan wait a little while, while we would rather have the war in Vietnam and the whole of Indochina come to a stop because we feel this is a more urgent issue.

President Nixon: I was referring only to the level of forces in Taiwan.

Prime Minister Chou: Because Taiwan is our internal affair, and also we have our own efforts which we have to make. We cannot place too much hope on the U.S. and Mr. President to achieve this. We can't hope that you will do everything. Of course, what you guarantee is only final withdrawal, and no support of the so-called Taiwan independence movement, and not allowing Japanese military forces to enter Taiwan while you are still there, and so on. As for the final settlement, that is our internal affair and that is something we must do.

And then there is another point that Mr. President appreciates, and Dr. Kissinger has mentioned. Everything must be concretely analyzed and concretely solved in accordance with a concrete situation. One must not take a simple principle and use it dogmatically. One must not apply it everywhere. That would not be good.

President Nixon: What, for example?

Prime Minister Chou: That is, we being so big, have already let the Taiwan issue remain for 22 years, and can still afford to let it wait there for a time. Although the issue of Taiwan is an obstacle to the normalization of our relations, yet we are not rushing to make use of the opponents of your present visit and attempt to solve all the questions and place you in an embarrassing position.

But as for Vietnam and the rest of Indochina, during the 26 years since the Second World War, war has never ceased in that area. People there have been bleeding. Therefore we have extreme sympathy for the people of that area. We believe they are closely linked with us. We thought of using wording in the communique but then we thought maybe there would be other implications and so we did not do so. You must understand this feeling. Because during the struggles against others, whether Korea or Vietnam, our three countries have participated in each other's country struggle. Historically, old China has committed aggression against these two countries. Of course this was during the times of the expansion of the old feudal empire.

Our assistance towards these countries, toward Korea and Vietnam, can be said to have been unconditional. But there is one thing we scrupulously abide by, that is our respect for their sovereignty and independence, the five peaceful principles of peaceful coexistence.



As Chairman Mao has pointed out, we who have been victorious have only an obligation to assist them, but not the right to interfere in their sovereignty. The debt we owe them was incurred by our ancestors. We have since liberation no responsibility because we overthrew the old system. Yet we still feel a deep and full sympathy for them.

I believe that it is the hope that Mr. President and Dr. Kissinger have conveyed, that you hope tensions in the Far East will be progressively reduced. In this easing of tensions the question of Vietnam and the other countries of Indochina is the key point. I believe Mr. President said in the toast at the reciprocal banquet in Peking that your relations with China were the key to world peace. And we believe that the question of Vietnam and other Indochinese countries is the key to the relaxation of tensions in the Far East. We are extremely sad that North Vietnam has been bombed in the period just before and during your visit here. To speak frankly, I would like to say the U.S. would suffer no losses if it had not bombed in that area. But now you have given the Soviet Union a chance to say that the music played in Peking to welcome President Nixon has been together with the sounds of the bombs exploding in North Vietnam.

I would like to say in conclusion, to express our feelings, and you know that we have exerted great restraint. Dr. Kissinger can bear witness. . .

President Nixon: Yes.

Prime Minister Chou: . . . that we have exerted extreme restraint since July of last year. Yet the key to easing tensions in the world does not lie there and Mr. President and I and Chairman Mao all understand that.

At the time of departing for home, these final words will have a deep impression on Mr. President and our other friends. Of course, there are great negotiations for Dr. Kissinger to deal with.

President Nixon: The two buddies.

Prime Minister Chou: And it is very clear that it is due precisely to these reasons that negotiations between China and the United States are comparatively easier than negotiations between Vietnam and the United States.



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Dr. Kissinger: Simply a point of honor... I don't believe that we have bombed in North Vietnam while we are here.

Prime Minister Chou: In the DMZ, the line along the DMZ, on both sides.

Dr. Kissinger: Not while we are here.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: We will check it.

Prime Minister Chou: It has already reached Quang Ninh.

Dr. Kissinger: We will check. There was an order not to do it.

Prime Minister Chou: You can find out upon your return to the U.S.

President Nixon: On a less serious note. The press has reported a statement by Mrs. Gandhi on our visit.

Prime Minister Chou: I don't think that is very serious, and we won't take it very seriously.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, but. . .

President Nixon: I don't take it seriously.

Prime Minister Chou: Although she is so big a state, I think that this maneuver is very petty.

(The meeting then ended. Prime Minister Chou escorted the President and Mrs. Nixon downstairs to say farewell to the Chairman of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. They then proceeded to the airport to depart for the United States.)

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