

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDA FOR THE PRESIDENT'S FILE
DISCUSSIONS WITH P.M. CHOU EN LAI

February 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 1972

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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By RRS Date 1-6-98

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

The President
William P. Rogers, Secretary of State
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Ronald L. Ziegler, Press Secretary to
the President
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State
for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
John A. Scali, Special Consultant to the
President
Alfred le S. Jenkins, Director of Office of
Asian Communist Affairs, State Department
John H. Holdridge, Senior Staff Member, NSC
Winston Lord, Senior Staff Member, NSC
Charles W. Freeman, Jr., State Department
. Interpreter

Prime Minister Chou En-lai
Yeh Chien-ying, Vice Chairman of the
. Military Commission
Li Hsien-nien, Vice Premier of the State
Council
Chi Peng-fei, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of Foreign
Affairs
Hsiung Hsiang-hui, Secretary to the Prime
Minister
Chang Wen-chin, Director of Western Europe,
North American, and Australian Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Han Hsu, Acting Chief of Protocol
Wang Hai-jung, Deputy Director of Protocol
Chai Chi-hua, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Chi Chao-chu, Interpreter

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Peng Hua, Chien Ta-yung, Shen Jo-yun,
Li Chung-ying, Ting Yuan-hung, Chang I-chun,
Ma Chieh-hsien and Lien Cheng-pao - Leading
Members and Staff Members of Departments
Concerned

DATE AND TIME: Monday, February 21, 1972 - 5:58 pm - 6:55 pm

PLACE: The Great Hall of the People, Peking, China

Prime Minister Chou:

We have too many elderly people in our leadership. So on this point we should learn from you. I have found that you have many young men; Mr. Chapin is very young indeed, and Mr. Green is not very old either.

Mr. Green: Very old man.

Prime Minister Chou: You used to stay in Hong Kong, didn't you?

Mr. Green: That's right, 1961 to 1963.

Prime Minister Chou: Then you know something about China.

Mr. Green: No, I know very little.

Prime Minister Chou: And then you can hold discussions this time when you come to China with our Minister of Foreign Affairs, under the leadership of your Secretary of State. You can raise any question you like.

Secretary Rogers: You will raise the questions.

Prime Minister Chou: Those who are concerned with these affairs, we shall see to it that they are able to know what they want to. Don't you think that's right.

President Nixon: Absolutely, but I hope they find some answers too.

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Prime Minister Chou: We shall reply to them (the press) not only what we have done wrong. Only in this way can we enable others to make comparisons and to look at things from the point of view of development.

It seems none of you are smoking. Then let us have some tea. We shall start out with some tea. So the meetings are prickly.

President Nixon: They have lots of questions too.

Prime Minister Chou: They wanted me to receive them, and I said it would be better after Mr. President leaves for me to receive them. It is not very easy for me to answer their questions in the middle. Nor am I very adept at briefing conferences like Mr. Kissinger. Because if I were to hold such briefing conferences I might tell the truth about what went on and then I would not be abiding by good faith. It is indeed not easy to deal with correspondents. Before we obtained power throughout the country, then we were more free and easy and could speak on more easy terms with correspondents.

President Nixon: Having read the transcripts of conversations the Prime Minister had with Dr. Kissinger, I think the Prime Minister can handle himself with anyone in the world.

Prime Minister Chou: No, I don't feel I am in a position to take such an exaggerated position. The knowledge of any one person is limited. As Chairman Mao just said, there is much we do not know about the United States; because we have been cut off for many years and tremendous changes have taken place in your country and that is also the case with China. China too has undergone many tremendous changes.

Having said so much, I should say that we express our welcome to President Nixon in bringing such a large party to visit the People's Republic of China. And I believe the thinking of Mr. President is that we should engage in serious discussions on matters we consider important, and first of all, as to how to promote the normalization of relations between our two countries. And particularly, you came despite the great distance between our two countries of more than 16,000 kilometers, and

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we express to you our thanks for that. And, what is more, there is such a big time difference between our two countries, so our first meeting we will make as short as possible.

One addition, however, is that before talks have even begun, Mr. President has already met with Chairman Mao and discussed questions which are to be discussed and that is advantageous.

President Nixon: Mr. Prime Minister, I first express appreciation on behalf of our party for receiving us. You have mentioned the fact that you do not know our country, and we on our part do not know your country. And this is a great loss to both of us.

Prime Minister Chou: So now we should make amends to that.

President Nixon: Now we begin a process through which we will have a chance to know each other as peoples and also to communicate as governments.

Prime Minister Chou: That is right.

President Nixon: And as we meet we have the opportunity to discuss our past differences, which the Prime Minister has pointed up in his conversations with Dr. Kissinger, and as we discussed today with Chairman Mao. We also can discuss those areas where we have common interests. I believe that when this trip was announced that a very solid majority of the American people approved the idea of the visit.

Prime Minister Chou: And we can notice that spirit both from your press, as well as the resolution passed by your two Houses. And also it can be seen from the "Spirit of '76" on your plane. (laughter) This "Spirit of '76" includes a period of 200 years, a pioneer spirit. I discussed this question of the pioneer spirit with Dr. Kissinger.

President Nixon: One of the side benefits of this visit was one of the rare occasions that I was able to get from our Congress a unanimous resolution. (laughter) What that means is that our people and our Congress of both parties want to see a new relationship between the People's Republic and

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the United States of America. They know, as the Prime Minister has pointed out in his statements, that the differences of the past and of the present are not going to be resolved by one visit.

Prime Minister Chou: That is right.

President Nixon: But they also know that if the world in which our children are to live is to be a more peaceful world, China and the United States must, when possible, work together rather than against each other.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes, we hope so.

President Nixon: And while we have, of course, been talking about differences, and in our private talks will discuss these differences both in our meetings with the Prime Minister and Chairman Mao and our Secretary of State's meetings with the Foreign Minister, we must not overlook the fact that the People's Republic of China has no territorial designs on the United States, and the United States has no territorial designs on China. Neither of our countries desires to dominate the other, and neither of our countries -- I can say this and the Prime Minister and Chairman Mao have said it -- wants to reach out and control the world. These things, then, we have in common.

As we look at the whole world, and the balance of power in the world, there is no reason for the People's Republic of China and the United States of America to be enemies, and there are many reasons why the People's Republic of China and the United States should work together for a peaceful Pacific and a peaceful world.

One of the refreshing things about the talks I have had already with Chairman Mao and with the Prime Minister is that they have talked directly, and honestly, and candidly. We cannot cover up with protocol and fine words the differences we may have. It does not serve the cause of better relations to put a cosmetic covering over fundamental differences of opinion.

Prime Minister Chou: That is right.

President Nixon: The conventional way to handle a meeting at the summit like this, while the whole world is watching, is to have meetings for

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several days, which we will have, to have discussions and discover differences, which we will do, and then put out a weasel-worded communique covering up the problems.

Prime Minister Chou: If we were to act like that we would be not only deceiving the people, first of all, we would be deceiving ourselves.

President Nixon: That is adequate when meetings are between states that do not affect the future of the world, but we would not be meeting our responsibility for meetings which the whole world is watching, and which will affect our friends in the Pacific and all over the world for years to come.

As we begin these meetings we have no illusions that we will solve everything. But we can set in motion a process which will enable us to solve many of these problems in the future. And the way to do it at the beginning, as the Prime Minister did in his conversations with Dr. Kissinger, and as we have done today and will do the rest of the week, is to lay the problems on the table, talk about them frankly and with good temper, and find the areas where we can agree and where we cannot agree. The men in this room and women in this room have fought a long hard struggle for a revolution which has succeeded. We know you believe deeply in your principles, and we believe deeply in our principles. We do not ask you to compromise your principles, just as you would not ask us to compromise ours.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes, indeed. In spite of the fact that there exists now such great differences between us and in the future there will still be differences. But as Mr. President has said, we will invariably find common ground to promote the normalization of relations between us.

I am very sorry -- I would like to apologize to Mr. Ziegler -- for not telling you in advance about the meeting between President Nixon and Chairman Mao. It came awfully suddenly. But I have already promised Mr. President that the press release of the meeting, the photos as well as the release, will be issued by your side first.

President Nixon: That is unprecedented. No other nation we have ever dealt with has been so generous.

Prime Minister Chou: That is what we should do because this is an initiative of your side, so you should take the initiative.

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President Nixon: One of the points it is important for all our colleagues here to understand is that the meetings we will have will be ones in which we can talk frankly, and there will be no disclosures to the press unless we agree -- unless the Prime Minister or the Chairman and I agree, and the Foreign Minister and Secretary Rogers agree -- because it is important that the talks we have be completely open, and they will not be completely open if we are talking to the press rather than to each other.

Prime Minister Chou: We can immediately reach agreement on that.

President Nixon: Right. I will see that even Dr. Kissinger gives no backgrounder. (laughter) Or Ziegler.

Prime Minister Chou: As you said to Chairman Mao this afternoon, today we shook hands, but John Foster Dulles didn't want to do that.

President Nixon: But you said you didn't want to shake hands with him.

Prime Minister Chou: Not necessarily. I would have.

President Nixon: We will shake hands. (Shakes hands with Chou.)

Prime Minister Chou: His assistant, Mr. Walter Bedell Smith, he wanted to do differently, but he did not break the discipline of John Foster Dulles, so he had to hold a cup of coffee in his right hand and, as generally one doesn't shake hands with the left hand, so he used his left hand to shake my arm. (laughter)

But at that time we couldn't blame you because the international viewpoint was that the socialist countries were a monolithic bloc, and the Western countries were a monolithic bloc. But that is not the case. Now we understand.

President Nixon: We have broken out of the old pattern. We look at each country in terms of its own conduct rather than lumping them all together, and saying because they have this kind of philosophy they are all in utter darkness. And I would say in honesty to the Prime Minister that my views, because I was in the Eisenhower Administration, were similar to those of Mr. Dulles at that time. But the world has changed since then,

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and the relationship between the People's Republic and the United States must change too. As the Prime Minister has said in a meeting with Dr. Kissinger, the helmsman must ride with the waves or he will be submerged with the tide.

Prime Minister Chou: That is right. (he laughs) Dr. Kissinger introduced this to you very well, because that is indeed what I said.

President Nixon: He tells me some things. (laughter)

Prime Minister Chou: I suppose that our future discussions should be separated into groups. We can proceed faster that way. Don't you suppose so? That is, for some assistants to have restricted meetings on basic major questions. And then for the Secretary and his assistants to discuss with the Foreign Minister and his assistants various specific matters to promote the normalization of relations between our two countries. As Chairman Mao said to Mr. President, this afternoon, we must first of all discuss major problems and should not discuss specific matters.

But then since Mr. President took office, this gate to our contacts has been opened, and to have these specific contacts between us would be beneficial to the promotion of the normalization of relations between the two countries. And we should say on this matter, Mr. President took the initiative. But our Minister of Foreign Affairs was rather slow in responding. I don't know about your State Department . . .

Secretary Rogers: We were fast.

Prime Minister Chou: So during the table tennis championship matches in Nagoya, Japan, the decision to invite the American table tennis team to China was made by Chairman Mao personally, and when it was issued, your State Department approved the visit. That shows that since the desire long existed, once the opportunity for that came it was taken.

And so, since that is the case, then for these bilateral specific matters, they can be discussed by your Secretary of State or his assistants and our Foreign Minister and his assistants. That will surely further relations. Of course, in discussing these specific matters of principle, I am sure Mr. Green will raise them, and we will reply, but our Foreign

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Minister and his assistants will also raise their questions. I believe that so long as both sides have this desire to promote normalization of relations then we can proceed rather easily on these specific matters.

But as for basic matters, we must depend on Mr. President and ourselves to solve. It goes without saying it involves all kinds of relationships as well as the question of the Taiwan situation. Shall we start this way tomorrow?

President Nixon: I think the Prime Minister has outlined a very satisfactory and workable process, and as our Foreign Ministers discuss the problems of normalization of contacts, or trade. . .

Prime Minister Chou: Culture. . .

President Nixon: Culture. . .

Prime Minister Chou: Scientific. . .

President Nixon: Right. . . technology. All of these matters they are prepared to discuss. In the meantime I know that the Prime Minister will want to discuss, and we will want to discuss with him, not only Taiwan but the problems of Southeast Asia, Korea, South Asia, and then related problems in the Pacific area -- the problem of our relations with Japan and then world problems generally, the relations with the great superpowers.

While our emphasis will necessarily be on the bilateral matters, in order to discuss these matters in an intelligent and effective way, we must do so in the framework of the whole world because -- as I said earlier -- while neither of our countries wants to rule the whole world, each of us by destiny is a world power, and we therefore must discuss issues of the whole world, not just the issues which are problems at the moment.

For example, we cannot discuss a critical area like South Asia, and India, without evaluating the policy of the Soviet Union toward that area. And the same can be said of the whole problem of arms control.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes, Mr. President had already pointed out this principle in your talk with correspondents in Kansas City in July of last year. There may be some differences or you may have changed your view. You overestimate us. You said we are a potential power. Prime Minister Heath also over-

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estimated us in his speech to the annual Conservative Party Conference. And that shows that there has been great turmoil and tremendous changes in the world since the Second World War.

So it is important for us to exchange views and seek some common ground.

President Nixon: The Prime Minister should not underestimate -- and I am sure he does not -- the reality of China. Not only is it a potential power, but so significant a power that the Soviet Union has more units on its border with China than it does on the border with Western Europe.

Prime Minister Chou: That is indeed the case. Our Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission is here, and he can testify to that.

President Nixon: We have very good intelligence on that.

Prime Minister Chou: I heard that Mr. President would want to deal with your domestic matters in the mornings, so the discussions will always be in the afternoon. Tomorrow, and maybe the day after, we can start in the afternoon. Maybe we should have a longer session in the afternoon, because I think two hours is not enough.

President Nixon: No, does the Prime Minister prefer to meet in the morning?

Prime Minister Chou: It is better for you to engage in your work in the morning.

President Nixon: But I can be available in the early afternoon.

Prime Minister Chou: Starting from 2:00?

President Nixon: Yes, that is good. I don't know whether I can stay up as late as the Prime Minister, but I will try.

Prime Minister Chou: It will be 2:00 Peking time.

President Nixon: That's when I am supposed to be asleep. The Prime Minister takes advantage of me. (laughter)

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Prime Minister Chou: Well, tomorrow after the performance, if you are still in a vigorous spirit, we can continue the discussions.

President Nixon: And as our discussions go along, if morning discussions seem to be useful I can turn my schedule around.

Prime Minister Chou: Well, as for tomorrow, let us set it at 2:00.

President Nixon: And then each day we can make a different plan.

Prime Minister Chou: As for the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister, they can decide on their time. And the Foreign Minister works in mornings, afternoons, any time.

President Nixon: They are much younger than we are (laughter).

Prime Minister Chou: And then, as the visit is not so very long and there is the previous question of a communique to do, it would be wise for us on each side to designate someone to do some thinking on it.

President Nixon: I think we should do that.

Prime Minister Chou: For our side, I will designate Mr. Ch'iao Kuan-hua. He will take part in our discussions as well.

President Nixon: And we will designate Dr. Kissinger for our side. He will, of course, work with the Secretary of State and me.

Prime Minister Chou: You know the Soviet Representative Malik is very dissatisfied with our Representative to the United Nations (Ch'iao Kuan-hau).

Secretary Rogers: We like him. (laughter)

Prime Minister Chou: He cooperated with Mr. Bush.

President Nixon: One of the more attractive aspects Dr. Kissinger told me of working with Chinese friends is they always publish the same text. That does not always happen (with the Soviet Union).

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Prime Minister Chou: We must act like that. Otherwise one would not enjoy any confidence.

President Nixon: I think this is a helpful kind of meeting, because if we begin this way, knowing we can talk in confidence and our press people will say only what we tell them too. . . and second, we will have people work on the communique being honest, and if there are areas of disagreement stating them. I think that will be a very good procedure.

Prime Minister Chou: It is good to make clear our differences because then it will be easier for us to find a common point, because there will be a comparison.

President Nixon: It is also important for us to know why we differ. We may find areas of disagreement not as wide as we thought, and sometimes it may be only a question of timing as to how long the difference will exist.

Prime Minister Chou: As Chairman Mao said, if we find there are differences between us and cannot solve them this time, we can try to solve them next time. We will find most by reason why we are not able to solve these differences. Maybe one side is wrong; maybe the other; and maybe both, and then. . . .

President Nixon: And maybe time will change it.

Prime Minister Chou: I won't take any more of your time now. For our side, in many of our sessions, the Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission, and Mr. . Li Hsien-nien may not take part in all the sessions.

President Nixon: Whatever you desire. And one question -- there, of course, is very great interest in the fact that I did meet with the Chairman. When should we

Prime Minister Chou: That has already been announced.

President Nixon: That's the trouble, the President is the last to find out anything (laughter).

Prime Minister Chou: I abide by what I promised. I told the New China News Agency not to publish it until 8:30. That means we gave the priority to Mr. Ziegler.

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Mr. Ziegler: We appreciate that.

Prime Minister Chou: Because even Mr. Yeh and Mr. Li Hsien-nien didn't know about that. I didn't have time to inform the two before.

President Nixon: The Prime Minister is spoiling Mr. Ziegler.