

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 17, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN SCALI

SUBJECT: Progress Report on the U.S. Tour of the  
Chinese Table Tennis Team

Since their arrival in the United States on April 12, the table tennis delegation from the People's Republic of China has played matches or exhibitions in Detroit, Ann Arbor, Williamsburg, and a suburban Maryland high school. They have been hosted at various dinners, toured an automobile assembly plant, an urban health clinic, two universities, and historical sites in Williamsburg and Washington (the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument). After Washington, they visit New York, Memphis and Los Angeles, and take a final rest period somewhere in California.

The overall progress of the tour has been smooth -- particularly considering the intense daily schedule. The warmth of the reception given the visiting Chinese group by American audiences has quickly thawed the initial tension surrounding their first exposure to the United States.

The American Reception

With few exceptions, Americans have given the Chinese visitors an exceptionally warm reception. Standing ovations have greeted the group at Detroit's Cobo Hall and at the University of Michigan. Informal contact with students and working people at a number of sites has led a number of the Chinese to remark privately that they did not anticipate such a friendly reception in the United States.

The only sour notes have been sounded by small right-wing groups demonstrating on the fringes of the tour. The Reverend



The Chinese have given a number of indications of their political objectives regarding the tour. They made short statements to workers in the Detroit automobile plant on the "solidarity of the international working class," and presented small badges bearing the outline of the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Peking to them.

The Chinese appear to be directing most of their political pressure at Chinese-Americans encountered on the tour. One translator of Chinese origin was told that the University of Michigan was a "bad institution" because its "standpoint" was not clear - - a reference to the presence there of Taiwan Independence Movement leader P'eng Ming-min. It is likely that PRC officials have had some hand in priming the sizeable and well-organized groups of Chinese-Americans who have greeted the Chinese along the way with very professional banners and flags of the People's Republic.

#### Internal Organization of the Tour

The tour is being run by a rather unwieldy amalgam of the U.S. Table Tennis Association and the National Committee for U.S. -China Relations. White House and State Department personnel, under my direction, have back-stopped the non-governmental host organizations and provided security for the Chinese. Despite the fears of the National Committee and the Table Tennis Association that governmental involvement in the tour would compromise their status as independent organizations, a workable, if cumbersome, liaison arrangement has evolved during the first week of the tour which has dealt satisfactorily with planning failures, sudden changes in schedule, and possible security problems.

The high visibility of this first Chinese tour in the U.S., and the crowded daily schedule, do not yet provide an appropriate standard for assessing future cultural exchange programs. However, at the end of the visit it will be important to review both American and Chinese attitudes on the best way to facilitate future programs. It is clear that on both sides what



Carl McIntire has organized pickets who have dogged the delegation from city to city, carrying placards with such slogans as "No Mao," and "Mao killed more Christians than Hitler killed Jews." In Cobo Hall another right-wing activist group, "Breakthrough," greeted the Chinese with dead rats thrown down from the balcony on parachutes and shouts of "red killers." They were vigorously ejected from the hall by security men. An occasional Nationalist Chinese flag has appeared, but has drawn little attention in the face of sizeable groups of Chinese-Americans carrying friendly banners and flags of the People's Republic.

### The Chinese Reaction

After considerable initial tenseness, the Chinese delegation has relaxed. Perhaps the best indicator of their increasingly relaxed mood was an informal after-dinner songfest at a suburban Washington restaurant where the American translators on the tour sang a Chinese song, with the Chinese team responding with a creditable version of "Home on the Range."

At an official level, Chinese foreign office representatives have indicated to their American hosts their concern with the peripheral voices of protest. In a private conversation with me, they said they are especially disturbed by posters which insult Chairman Mao (apparently a reference to the McIntire posters). The Chinese expressed the hope that their American friends will "respect their feelings" in the matter of the protests. They indicated that this factor will influence the development of future Sino-American cultural exchanges. The statement seemed to be primarily a matter of getting a position on the record. However, in revealing concern over demonstrations the Chinese have also expressed their appreciation for the security and other backstage arrangements made by the U.S. government.

In reply, I have noted the difference in our societies. While deploring placards which personally insult Mao, I have recalled that we have a tradition which permits peaceful protest. Sometimes, from the White House windows, fringe protesters can be seen attacking the U.S. government. We can seek to minimize protests, I said, but not prevent them entirely during the trip.



is formally a "people-to-people" exchange has strong elements of governmental involvement, and it may prove desirable for both governments to formalize their contacts in such matters.

### Press Coverage

Press coverage has been about 98% favorable. In Detroit, the arrival city, the story was "smash" page one play in the newspapers for three days running. In addition to wrapup stories on the day's activities, each newspaper usually had two to three features on various phases of the schedule, assorted comments, security, and dozens of photos. Detroit television prominently led newscasts with the Chinese activities.

National coverage has been substantial. ABC and CBS TV News, who sent correspondents to Detroit, had stories on their nightly newscasts three nights in a row. NBC TV covered their activities on two newscasts. Wire service stories have been lengthy and positive. Coverage by reporters for the New York Times, Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, and Los Angeles Times has been extensive and mostly favorable. The only sour notes mentioned in passing have to do with the amount of security, the sloppy scheduling of events and the alleged reluctance of the host organizations to permit genuine people-to-people contact. This latter criticism disappeared after the informal visits to Ann Arbor and Williamsburg.