

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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## MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Prime Minister Chou En-lai, People's Republic of China  
Chi P'eng-fei, Acting PRC Foreign Minister  
Chang Wen-chin, Director, Western Europe and American Department, PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Hsuing Hsiang-hui, Secretary to the Prime Minister  
Wang Hai-jung, Deputy Chief of Protocol, PRC  
Tang Wen-sheng and Chi Chao-chu, Chinese Interpreters and Chinese Notetaker  
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Winston Lord, Senior Staff Member, NSC

PLACE: Great Hall of the People, Peking

DATE & TIME: October 24, 1971, 9:23 p.m. - 11:20 p.m.

GENERAL SUBJECTS: Communique, Announcements of Trips

PM Chou: We will continue with the discussion we had this morning.

Now we would like to put forward a very tentative and unofficial draft for the joint communique. It is mainly drafted by our side, with the exception of some similarities in the beginning. Most of it is an exposition of our point of view, also putting in some possible common points of view and also some of your points of view, and in other places we left it blank to put in your point of view. So we can only say to you it is not official, and is a tentative draft.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand.

PM Chou: So, we will just read it out, through translation.

Dr. Kissinger: Is there an English text you will be able to give us after it is read to us?

PM Chou: I will come to that. If Dr. Kissinger considers that this draft

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may be used for your study and you find that you need it, then we will give it to you. Because in this way, then, we express in a freer way our views. Please forgive me if I ask the Acting Foreign Minister to read it out, with the interpreter giving the translation.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

PM Chou: Thank you for giving me time for rest, like the opportunity which your President gave you when listening to the Emperor of Ethiopia. [laughter] I tried my best to say as few words as possible, but yet I couldn't do it.

Dr. Kissinger: You mean in the morning.

PM Chou: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: I find our discussions really very useful, and I wish we had even more time.

PM Chou: It's a pity you couldn't stay longer.

(Chi P'eng-fei, Acting Foreign Minister, reads the first Chinese draft, attached at Tab A.)

Dr. Kissinger (after second paragraph): When you say "two sides," you mean Chairman Mao and President Nixon?

PM Chou: Yes. Grammatically speaking, that probably has to be put in there.

Dr. Kissinger: A slight change. I just wanted to understand what you were including here.

Interpreter (after last full paragraph on page one): We will just translate paragraph by paragraph.

Dr. Kissinger (during first paragraph of page three): He (indicating the Acting Foreign Minister, who kept trying to resume the reading in Chinese before the interpreter had finished speaking) is terribly eager. Did he draft it? [laughter]

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Dr. Kissinger (during first paragraph of page four): What do you mean by "region"?

PM Chou: That is those who are in Indochina. When we say "region of Indochina," it just means the three countries of Indochina.

Dr. Kissinger: Does this include the Chinese troops building a road in northern Laos?

PM Chou: That is foreign troops. But they are engineering corps. They will, of course, withdraw. They are considered to be foreign troops, but they are engineering corps, and not combat troops. But, of course, they are foreign troops.

(After full text has been read by Chi and translated): That's all.

Dr. Kissinger: Could we perhaps make some preliminary comments, or would the Prime Minister perhaps like to add something?

PM Chou: No, please.

Dr. Kissinger: Would it be possible for me to have a copy so I can refer to certain phrases?

PM Chou: We will give it to you later, because it's being retyped now. It's just being rushed out; it's rather incomplete. It's being retyped now.

Dr. Kissinger: All right, then I have to do it from memory. Let me deal with it in two parts, first with the basic concept and secondly with the execution of the concept.

I thought this afternoon a great deal about our discussion this morning. And I came to the conclusion that there is much merit in the Prime Minister's point of view that it would be better for both sides to state their views plainly and thereby produce perhaps a somewhat unusual communique which reflects the unusual nature of our relationship. So the basic idea that the Prime Minister put forward, that the communique take the form of each side's stating its position and then both sides stating their common positions is a good one, and one, I believe, acceptable to us. I will have to discuss it with the President, but this I am fairly sure about.

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Now we come to two questions; one, how is this to be actually carried out, and secondly, what topics are to be covered? Let me take the second point first for the consideration of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has now a long list of a number of countries on which our views are stated, which tends to negate the general principle that we are not negotiating about third countries. Also, we don't want to offend any of your neighbors by leaving them out. [Chou laughs]

Seriously, the problem is that if we list some countries and not others it raises questions, and if we list all countries, it raises questions about what we are doing discussing so many third countries.

Now, let me turn to the substance as I remember it. I think the general point that I have made is supported by the fact that in the discussion of basic principles, the formulations that you have are not far from what we can accept, with, however, one proviso. Throughout all of this, the Chinese position is stated in its most intransigent terms. Now we recognize your necessities, both domestic and international, but we have our own necessities, both domestic and international. And we have to answer the question of why we came all the way to Peking to listen again to what we can read in the Chinese newspapers and what we have already heard in the many interviews the Prime Minister has given.

Of course, we are not asking you to change your views, but it must be possible to find more moderate formulations. And you have to understand that certain words have a different significance in America than they have here. I told you this morning that we are opposed to racial discrimination, but we cannot accept any phraseology that implies that we permitted a discussion of American domestic problems while we were in Peking. But I believe, if I had the text, that I could make suggestions whereby by the deletion of maybe two sentences the first part would be quite acceptable.

Now, let me turn to Vietnam. I frankly do not see how it can make any sense for the People's Republic to support a seven-point program which Hanoi has told us privately it does not want us to negotiate. And if we make public the secret negotiations we will both look ridiculous. On three different occasions Mr. Le Duc Tho told me, and I have the stenographic record, that we should discuss the nine points and not the seven points, and we have replied twice to the nine points. So, if you want to support points which your own ally is not supporting, that is your privilege,

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but it will make neither of us look very good.

But this is an editing problem, because no doubt you can find words to support the position of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam without referring to something they have themselves rejected in private talks. And if you want to maintain this phraseology now, knowing what the record enables us to make public, I will not object.

But, on the other hand, there are certain phrases which would be very offensive to the American public. When you call yourself "the reliable rear area of the just war," or whatever the phrase is, you are saying no more than what I have read for years in your newspapers. So this is in no way surprising.

On the other hand, you have to understand that the American public has suffered a great deal in this war, and that the mothers of the soldiers who were killed there, and of the prisoners who are held there, will ask themselves why the President had to go 12,000 miles to be told all these things.

With respect to the eight-point program about Korea, I have already stated our views with respect to both its grammar and its use of adjectives. And therefore the objective tendency of this formulation is to sharpen differences, when in fact our positions are beginning to approach each other.

With respect to Japan, I do not see the People's Republic standing to make any comment about Okinawa, since this is a subject that concerns us and Japan -- I mean in a document that is supposed to be signed by the President of the United States; of course, you are free to make any comment in your own statements.

And on the general points about Japan, we have had a full discussion, and the Prime Minister knows our views. But if he maintains that the People's Republic must state these views, we must state views that are so contrary that again it raises questions about what the purpose of the visit was.

With respect to the Indian subcontinent, I believe that the phraseology, with the deletion of perhaps one sentence, is essentially acceptable. I would therefore like to put to the Prime Minister . . . oh, Taiwan.

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I believe also that the formulations with respect to Taiwan go further than it would be possible for us to say on this visit. I have told the Prime Minister exactly what can be expected from us, and I have told him that we would be prepared to extend some of the formulations we submitted to you. But we cannot go so far as you have proposed. Perhaps the best way to proceed would be for me, or for us, to draft tonight something that is possible and show it to you tomorrow.

PM Chou: Especially on Taiwan?

Dr. Kissinger: On Taiwan.

So what I would like to propose to the Prime Minister is the following. The basic approach, despite all my criticisms, is, I think, a useful one. But I believe that if this communique were published in this form, the impact on the United States would be exactly the opposite of what you intend. All of those who have sought improved relations with the People's Republic will be discredited because it will be said the President came 12,000 miles in order to be asked to sign a document containing the sharpest possible formulations against United States policy. There must be some way of expressing your principles which also maintains the self-respect of the American leaders. This problem is less acute in the section on general principles in which there are only two or three sentences that could be considered offensive, but it is acute in the specifics.

One other point, and I have to do all this from memory, it isn't possible to refer to understandings in a public communique -- we will be spending the next two years explaining what the understandings were. With respect to our understandings, you have to rely on us to be far-sighted. It is not in our interest to try to trick you, and if we try to trick you, you will find it out very quickly, and everything we are trying to do will be destroyed.

We do not have to settle our differences; indeed we cannot on this visit, or maybe ever. But we do have to indicate that the visit marked some significant new beginning, or why else is it taking place? We must be able to answer the question of exactly what was accomplished, and what was accomplished cannot be only things that we must do in response to Chinese demands. There are many forces on the right, and curiously enough also on the pro-Soviet left and the pro-India liberal side, who would like nothing better than if this visit can end without any tangible progress either in mood or in content.

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So I would say that I agree with the method of the Prime Minister; I think that the first section is approaching what can be said, but the remainder of the document needs reconsideration as to content, not so much as to method.

That is all I have to say, and the Prime Minister will forgive me that I did it from memory and without the document, and I may have been unjust in my quotations here and there.

There is one slight ambiguity which is unintended, which I want to call to the attention of the Prime Minister. At one point he says China has no intention of becoming a superpower. At another point he says no major country should collude with another against a third. So unless the Prime Minister is making a distinction between a superpower and a major power, this would leave China free to collude with another country against a third. I just wanted to point out the possibility.

PM Chou: We do differentiate between "superpower" and "major power."

Dr. Kissinger: It's a minor point.

PM Chou: You see, we use "major power" incorrectly. It should say "big country." It means big in size and population.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand your thought, but it is something someone reading it would pick up. It's a pure drafting problem, and I understand you. We have no problem between us.

PM Chou: The translation is incorrect. It shows how interpreters influence international events.

Dr. Kissinger: The other points I raised are serious.

PM Chou: I will not be in haste to reply to the other questions. I would like to express my true views. This morning I raised the question of Taiwan. On the question of Taiwan we put it in a most restrained manner. And it is great restraint, whether from the point of view of our propaganda or the demands of our people.

Dr. Kissinger: I don't object to your statement about your position. I believe it would be counterproductive to state our position in the form in which you stated it.

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PM Chou: But you must express these questions in some way.

Dr. Kissinger: Oh, yes.

PM Chou: Of course, on this we made use of one of your formulations in acknowledging that "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China." That's one point of view.

Secondly, we will put it this way, that is the United States will encourage the Chinese to settle this internal question by themselves, through peaceful negotiations. This is what you have said all along, and your side expressed a willingness to do this.

Dr. Kissinger: The word "internal" will give us trouble at this stage.

PM Chou: Then international? No, we couldn't accept that.

Dr. Kissinger: Of course not. That's why we don't think . . . If we now say "internal" it will raise numerous questions. We will then be asked to say why you said "internal." We will say we recognize the government in Taipei and it will get us into an interminable argument. The things that should matter to you are what I have said, and that the President will repeat. These are the measures that will guide our policy. What is in a communique is in itself only symbolic.

PM Chou: But these four points which we had formulated on the Taiwan question are crucial points, and if these are not indicated, then we will not know to what date in the distant future the promotion of the normalization of relations will be extended. We didn't mention the third point we wanted to express, that is you will not carry out or support any activities aimed at separating Taiwan from China and will not support two China formulas and so on, and the fourth point, the withdrawal of troops.

Actually, these measures, as we discussed, must go through a series of steps. But the United States side is bound to express its position on these matters. Otherwise, neither the Chinese people nor people of the world would know how our two countries will have relations, along what track we will proceed. You said this morning you want to find some formulation to express that.

Dr. Kissinger: On the military question?

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PM Chou: The military aspect and not separating Taiwan from the motherland.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand that, but I have also told the Prime Minister two things: first, it's possible for us to do more than we can say, and secondly, it's possible for us to take more measures after next year than during next year. I have made both of these points to the Prime Minister.

PM Chou: Well, that has been said between our two sides already, and when the President comes he will, of course, reaffirm that.

Dr. Kissinger: He will reaffirm everything that I have said.

PM Chou: That is the position you had already told us. But if this is not indicated in some form in the communique, then the people of our countries as well as the people of the world, will not know what is our orientation, what is the direction of our efforts. They will wonder why there is a normalization of relations, on what basis normalization will be established.

Dr. Kissinger: But you have said in your document what the requirements for normalization are.

PM Chou: That is so.

Dr. Kissinger: So lack of clarity is not one of the problems of this document; exactly the opposite.

PM Chou: [laughs] Generally speaking, you don't resort to diplomatic language, but here you are using diplomatic language.

Dr. Kissinger: This is true, and I have told you exactly why. What I would like to do on Taiwan -- I don't object to your definition of your side. Let me draft tonight something for our side which includes a point about the military question, and show it to you in the morning. I understand your point about your principle, and I will go as far as I believe it is possible to go.

PM Chou: Only on the military aspect?

Dr. Kissinger: On the whole thing.

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PM Chou: Of course, you are bound to withdraw from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits. It's a question of time. We are not asking you to immediately withdraw, although we have the right to make such a demand, but we are not making it precisely because we understand the normalization of relations requires a process.

But there is this question which I raised this time, and you look upon as new: that is the question of Taiwan being undetermined so-called. On this question the United States must find some way of expressing its view that you will not bring about a separation of Taiwan from China. We are not asking for you to undertake to stop all of your activities, because even if you did so, it may not succeed. We won't blame you for that. We just ask you not to support these activities.

Dr. Kissinger: I have already given the Prime Minister assurances on that. There are two questions. The first is what can we say now about things we have discussed, and I believe we can say something to indicate a direction, but we cannot say everything we have discussed.

The second point, which is perhaps insoluble, is that the average American, if he reads this document is going to ask why. The average American, not Huey Newton, or some who come through here, will find a whole list of propositions that will to him appear extraordinarily critical of the United States. With respect to which we are making a whole series of concessions, and he will ask why. What is it that has changed to make us give up long established position? I am not speaking of Taiwan above. If it were alone with general principles, that would be different. But if there is a whole list of other countries in the world and on top of that Taiwan, . . .

PM Chou: That is you talk about this by linking the topics together?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, the whole context. Standing alone this is different. I am not saying this only about Taiwan, but about the whole tone of the document which then ends with Taiwan. All that comes out in a slightly positive nature is that American representatives can come to Peking on an irregular basis, which is I am sure a pleasant thing for them, but is not reciprocal.

I am certain that if we sign this document we would find ourselves in the curious position that our own political opponents would accuse us of being soft on Communism, which would be an odd event for Richard Nixon. And this time I don't mean on the right.

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I am not speaking about Taiwan; Taiwan is the one that's easiest to fix in this document. The basic principles of Taiwan I think we can fix fairly easily. On other points together with Taiwan, it becomes very tough.

PM Chou: Well, on the question of Taiwan, you should think about a way to express yourself on these four points. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to make an accounting to our people.

As for your views on the other points, after you have seen our draft in writing, then you can put forward your views. But you should try to find some formulation to express these four points concerning Taiwan, and it may be possible your formulation would be even better than ours. For instance, your formulation that "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China," that is something you thought out. We could not have thought that out.

Dr. Kissinger: I think between 2:00 and 3:00 in the morning you probably could have.

PM Chou: Indeed, I admire you for thinking out such a formulation.

(Miss T'ang says something in Chinese.)

Dr. Kissinger: She claims she thought that one up?

Interpreter: She says they copyrighted that, not from us . . .

Dr. Kissinger: But from whom?

Interpreter: First of all, the Premier says he cannot claim the copyright on such, nor could Miss T'ang.

Dr. Kissinger: How should we proceed now?

PM Chou: It's already 11:00. We should rest now, at least for your two assistants. Otherwise the calories we have consumed will be used up.

Dr. Kissinger: Does the Prime Minister prefer me in an exhausted state?

PM Chou: No, no, no. I will try to give you the English translation around 12:00.

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Dr. Kissinger: Could the Chinese side reconsider some of the formulations that I have objected to, while I reconsider some of the formulations that we have discussed?

PM Chou: As we had already considered our formulations, we would need your opinion as a stimulant for our ideas.

Dr. Kissinger: I don't mean Taiwan. I have given you a list of things I objected to.

PM Chou: We will study them. Principally we would like to hear your views first.

Dr. Kissinger: My question was what is our work plan then for tomorrow?

Chou's Interpreter: At 9:00 the Premier will come to your guest house, and the same people, too.

Dr. Kissinger: All right. This is a rather long communique. How much time can the Prime Minister give to this problem tomorrow? I want to know so that I can set the departure of the plane.

PM Chou: It's only an initial, tentative draft. And so long as your views approach each other, then a further exchange can be done either through your sending another special envoy to Peking, or through Paris, or some other means. Because, as I had said to you before, Chairman Mao also considered that if it is not possible to agree on a communique, then we might consider not issuing any communique at all. But that might not be so good for your President after he has come and visited China, and yet no results are announced. But we had thought about that possibility. So, what we should do at this time is try to reach a general agreement on a tentative draft, and then we must see how events develop. Some points we may be able to affirm.

Dr. Kissinger: This could take us the better part of tomorrow.

PM Chou: That's right. At least three hours.

Dr. Kissinger: Probably more. Shall we set the departure for 5:00?

PM Chou: Yes. You mean leave Peking at 5:00?

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Dr. Kissinger: Or maybe 6:00?

PM Chou: Maybe 5:00 would be all right. Or 6:00.

Dr. Kissinger: Let's say 5:00 and we can put it off an hour if it is necessary.

PM Chou: All right.

Dr. Kissinger: I think it is very important to get an outline. It is very difficult to send a special envoy here who knows enough about our discussions to talk to you intelligently. Of course, I could meet somebody in Paris or elsewhere.

PM Chou: That will take time then.

Dr. Kissinger: Exactly.

PM Chou: It will be best if we can arrive at some outline at this time.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

PM Chou: On the main points.

Dr. Kissinger: Once we have an outline, then we can exchange drafts.

PM Chou: That's right. Then we can have an exchange through our channels, because there will bound to be some considerations on the wording. And when your President comes, you can still discuss this then.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, but I have the impression that the Prime Minister will be somewhat occupied.

PM Chou: I will find some time.

Dr. Kissinger: And also, now my deputy is taking care of the President, but when the President is here, I must take care of his business, too.

But I think we understand each other, and I think you understand what my problems are with this draft. And we will take a look at it, and perhaps you can take a look at it also.

But you have said you still have two matters.

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PM Chou: That is on the short announcement about your visit.

Dr. Kissinger: Oh, yes.

PM Chou: There's practically nothing different at all in the two drafts.

Dr. Kissinger (to Winston Lord): There are two drafts?

Interpreter: That is, our revision of your draft.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, that's all right.

Interpreter: It's basically the same.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, yours is better English.

PM Chou: You are probably praising your schoolmate.

Dr. Kissinger: It's because I studied Kant.

PM Chou: We'll type it out again.

And then the second point is about the time of the President's visit. Take a look at it, please. That is actually more or less what you said early last night. Maybe you think there is something to be added?

Dr. Kissinger: It sounds all right to me. I will ask the President if he has any big problem with it, but let's agree to this.

PM Chou: Certainly, you ask your President.

Dr. Kissinger: May I keep both. I like to have the Chinese.

PM Chou: As for the time for the announcement, we prefer within the last ten days of November.

Dr. Kissinger: Either the 20th or the 22nd.

PM Chou: It will be announced . . . the announcement will be . . . . .  
(He becomes aware of the draft handed to Kissinger.) We have laid bare our thinking to you in a working paper of ours. We have given you our notes on what you said the other day. We have given you secret papers.

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Dr. Kissinger: What date do you prefer?

PM Chou: Anyway, some time within the last ten days in November. You can consider the specific date after consulting your President, or we may tell you our preference after we consider the date.

Dr. Kissinger: All right, through Paris. We probably prefer it before the 24th, because the President will go away. It's no big problem.

PM Chou: On Thanksgiving?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. All right. We will propose a date.

PM Chou: You prefer the time always to be 1600 in the afternoon for the release, Washington time?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. The time will always be 1600 Washington time. All right. So we will propose a date to you within the next few days, within a week.

I have one technical matter. Our technical people are under the impression that you have agreed that a technical group may visit China after this announcement has been made, say in December.

PM Chou: Led by General Haig?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. And he knows my thinking very well.

Will you announce my departure from here? I think you are free to do so.

PM Chou: Yes, but as for the announcement itself, that will be in the same wording, on the 27th for you and the 28th for us.

Dr. Kissinger: At 4:00 in the afternoon for us. You didn't give me the text. It's another confidential document.

PM Chou: That is not a confidential document. That is especially for you.

Dr. Kissinger: But if it's not confidential, the New York Times won't print it. [Chou laughs.]

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Dr. Kissinger: All right. It might be a little safer to meet at 10:00, to give us an opportunity to get this retyped.

PM Chou: All right.

Dr. Kissinger: Good.

PM Chou: Anyway, on the last day one must work very hard.

Dr. Kissinger: Will we have a general session tomorrow, or finish this?

PM Chou: First this one, and then the general meeting.