

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Prime Minister Chou En-lai, People's Republic of China  
Chi P'eng-fei, Acting PRC Foreign Minister  
Tang Wen-sheng and Chi Chao-chu, Chinese Interpreters  
  
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Winston Lord, Senior Staff Member, NSC

PLACE: Government Guest House (HAK Sitting Room), Peking

DATE & TIME: October 23, 1971, 9:05 - 10:05 p.m.

GENERAL SUBJECT: The President's Visit

(There was some informal discussion of a picture on the wall of a place near Vietnam and how it evoked the landscape of Vietnam.)

Dr. Kissinger: Mr. Prime Minister, when you mentioned the intelligence plane yesterday. . .

PM Chou: The number was wrong, not SR-2 - SR-71. It has the same sound in Chinese.

Dr. Kissinger: I understood what you were talking about. I wasn't absolutely sure whether or not you were perhaps mistaken, and therefore I checked in Washington. And I have found that your information was correct, although I am told the closest it came was 20 miles to Chinese territory.

PM Chou: [Interpreter gesturing to indicate meaning] In various places.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

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PM Chou: Because it flew along the border, and came close to the Chinese border at various points, at various provinces. (He named them.)

Dr. Kissinger: At any rate, this was not a flight that was authorized from Washington. Perhaps Admiral McCain is not as harmless, as I said yesterday.

PM Chou: He sent some planes to have a look around the other places and also to have a look at places around the eastern part of the border. Of course, it was outside our present territorial sea, but our radars could see them.

Dr. Kissinger: Well, we have stopped this particular kind of flight until we have a full review of the program, when I return.

I also have one other piece of information which I wanted to tell the Prime Minister. We have a report that the Chinese Nationalists on the Taiwan General Staff are considering flying a R-104 reconnaissance aircraft over the mainland in order to disrupt our policy and our talks. We are trying to stop it, but I want you to know that if it should occur, it is without our permission and against our opposition. I don't even know what an R-104 is.

PM Chou: (laughs) It's a kind of reconnaissance plane anyway.

Dr. Kissinger: That's right. I don't think it's a high-altitude plane.

PM Chou: It's the kind that comes to harrass us sometimes. We can often distinguish between Chiang Kai-shek's planes and your planes, between the planes you fly and the planes you have given them to fly.

Dr. Kissinger: None of our planes fly into the mainland.

PM Chou: But if we know they take off from Taiwan, then, generally speaking, they are Chiang Kai-shek's planes.

Dr. Kissinger: That's correct.

PM Chou: There is only one day left so we must step up in our work, and that's how things always come out. Of course, it's not the announcement of your present visit -- that's easy to deal with. We have a draft of the announcement we consider it possible to make, on your present visit after you leave. We can give it to you. It's very simple. But the task is very clear, that is, to decide the date of the President's visit. We are preparing to announce it as next February, but not to put in the specific date, to maintain security and for other reasons. You can either decide it yourself, or give us a reply after you go back and talk with the President.

Dr. Kissinger: We can do it in two stages; it's up to you. We can say something about my visit here which doesn't include a date, and then on a date which we mutually agree or we can announce the President's visit, that it will be in February.

PM Chou: That would be all right.

Dr. Kissinger: We could say, for example, the preparations for the visit have gone well, and we will announce the date later.

PM Chou: You probably have drafted it already.

Dr. Kissinger: We will look at yours and then see.

PM Chou: We will put them together. Maybe it won't be as good as yours. (Dr. Kissinger handed over the U. S. draft.)

Maybe "arrangements" would be better than "plans." Maybe you call your thick book the "plans."

Dr. Kissinger: But if the Prime Minister thinks he can skip the thick book by changing a word, he underestimates our bureaucracy.

PM Chou: Perhaps you read them through, but I only glanced over the outlines.

Dr. Kissinger: I read them through because it may not look like this to you, but we reduced the number in a brutal fashion.

PM Chou: Therefore out of our regard for Dr. Kissinger's efforts with having cut down drastically the numbers, we haven't touched the numbers. There have been some small disputes, but I think they will be settled peacefully.

And because your security officers said it will be too troublesome for the President to stay overnight in three separate places, we are planning to omit the visit to Hangchow. Because in February the weather might not be so good there. Possibly snow might be there at that time of year, and you have enough snow in the United States. You don't have to come here for that. So there will be two places, Peking and Shanghai. So if we would like that, we can cut out one day and make it six, that is neither five nor seven, a conciliation between the two. One day in Shanghai and five in Peking.

Dr. Kissinger: I am prepared to raise the issue of Hangchow with the President because both you and the Vice Chairman said it is such a picturesque site, and I am prepared to raise the issue. Maybe the way we should leave it is if the President can stay seven days, we go to Hangchow, and if he can stay only six days we leave it at Peking and Shanghai.

PM Chou: All right.

Dr. Kissinger: But this is entirely up to you, Mr. Prime Minister.

PM Chou: There is no question on our side. It's the Secret Service people, because they say that if the President is going to stay overnight in a third place, they will have to have an increased group of people to prepare the place he is going to stay overnight. Otherwise the President can only be there during the daylight. Of course, it doesn't take long to get there -- only a half hour's flight. If the President would like to go to Hangchow, he can go there in the daytime, and go back to Shanghai at night. That would make it easier for the Secret Service people. But there is a small villa beside the west lake at Hangchow, and maybe when Mrs. Nixon sees it she won't want to go back to Shanghai, and that will make the Secret Service people nervous.

Dr. Kissinger: Let us worry about the Secret Service. They are professionally nervous.

PM Chou: Of course in any of the places where we take the President we will guarantee the security.

Dr. Kissinger: The job of the Secret Service is to be obsessed with security, but the President is not obsessed with security.

PM Chou: That will make them even more tense.

Dr. Kissinger: Until this trip the President didn't know how many Secret Service agents he had with him.

PM Chou: But if he knew he probably would be dissatisfied with them, and criticize them. It would make their work more difficult.

Dr. Kissinger: That's true. What happened was that he criticized them and now they are angry with me.

PM Chou: So it is better not to tell him.

Dr. Kissinger: I will take it up with him. If they want to bring in another small group of Secret Service men, will that make it impossible for you?

PM Chou: No difficulty for us.

Dr. Kissinger: Then we can settle it.

PM Chou: What I am worrying about is the weather might not be so agreeable. It may snow or it may not. The latitude there is about 35°. What city is that latitude in the United States?

Dr. Kissinger: I don't know.

PM Chou: It's farther south than Washington. Like Los Angeles?

Dr. Kissinger: No, it rarely snows there in America.

PM Chou: It doesn't snow in Los Angeles?

Dr. Kissinger: Never, but that is because the wind comes from the west.

PM Chou: So we can leave it at that.

Dr. Kissinger: That I will let you know through your Ambassador in Paris to see whether . . . . . he can either go to Shanghai and fly to Hangchow and back to Shanghai, or spend two nights in Shanghai and one night in Hangchow. Is that your proposal? Or one night in Shanghai and one night in Hangchow.

PM Chou: Our proposal is to go directly from Peking to Hangchow and stay for the evening and go to Shanghai the next day, or not to stay over, but go in the evening to Shanghai. If it is a six-day schedule, then go directly on the fifth day to Shanghai.

Dr. Kissinger: On the seven-day schedule we would go to Hangchow, either during one day, or stay over, and then go to Shanghai.

PM Chou: Right.

Dr. Kissinger: I have a complaint. They told us today we would be back at 12:00 and we got back at two minutes after 12:00. It's the first time you were not exactly on time.

PM Chou: From the Summer Palace?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. Usually you arrive here on the second you say you are going to.

But I think this is a good plan.

PM Chou: So they can go and have a look and see whether it will or will not be convenient for the President to see that place when he comes.

Dr. Kissinger: And don't take everything they say absolutely seriously. If any questions come up, talk to me. I am not sure they have completely understood the legal aspects of sovereignty.

PM Chou: For instance, with the satellite station used for communication and the Boeing 747, and the airports, if we can buy it, we will buy it from you. If we cannot buy it, we will rent it from you.

Dr. Kissinger: I think from our point of view renting would be easier.

PM Chou: There are no difficulties for you or us.

Dr. Kissinger: So you will lease the ground station, and the 747 also? Or...our people are under the impression that you want to build a separate structure for it, and not have a 747.

PM Chou: That would only be useful if we could buy the equipment.

Dr. Kissinger: All right. So we will bring in the 747. I don't know whether there is any way of leasing a 747, or of leasing the equipment on one; we will work out an arrangement.

PM Chou: We heard that it would be possible.

Dr. Kissinger: To lease it? The ground station is easy. That we can work out a leasing arrangement with you on.

PM Chou: If we build houses and you bring equipment would it be possible for us to rent the equipment?

Dr. Kissinger: I am sure. I have to tell the Prime Minister something. The President and I will probably be the only two people who will understand why you should want to pay for something when we are prepared to do it for nothing. But I understand completely, and I admire it. But if they are a little slow in understanding it, forgive them.

PM Chou: There is no question, because they are used to managing the whole show, so they don't understand the reason. But gradually they will be able to understand.

Dr. Kissinger: May I go back, Mr. Prime Minister, to the question of announcing my trip. When should that be made?

PM Chou: You mean the announcement about your visit?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

PM Chou: When do you think?

Dr. Kissinger: We can do it either after I return or when I leave.

PM Chou: We can do it according to your convenience, because it is best that we should always do it in the way that would be convenient for the guest.

Dr. Kissinger: Then let me suggest that we do it when I return because then it is easier for me to answer questions about what it means. You don't have to meet the press. That would make it, to be safe, let's put it on Wednesday, Washington time.

PM Chou: In the morning or the evening?

Dr. Kissinger: We can do it either time.

PM Chou: You leave China on the 25th, then stay over in Alaska one day?

Dr. Kissinger: I will probably stay over in Alaska because we can use it to rest and because of the time change. I will not be back in Washington until Tuesday evening around 6:00, which is Wednesday your time.

PM Chou: Then maybe it could be issued the evening of the 27th your time, morning of the 28th our time. Is that wrong?

Dr. Kissinger: No, it's right. Our best press release time would be 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon, but that's a very bad time for you.

PM Chou: That doesn't matter.

Dr. Kissinger: Then shall we say 4:00 on the 27th?

PM Chou: 5:00 make it.

Dr. Kissinger: Make it 5:00. We always have the technical problem of the evening news; which if we don't release by 4:30 it will not be on the evening news.

PM Chou: You mean the evening newspapers?

Dr. Kissinger: Evening television.

PM Chou: That is all right, because if we release at 4:00 in the morning then it will be in the papers. All right, very good.

Dr. Kissinger: Or we can do it at 11:00 in the morning.

PM Chou: No, because for us 4:00 in the morning means it will be in that day's papers, but in the evening it won't be.

Dr. Kissinger: Okay, 4:00 Washington time, Wednesday.

PM Chou: In China, it will be 4:00 in the morning the next day. That way we always have a day's difference. Your announcement was on the 15th, ours on the 16th last time.

Dr. Kissinger: This text, or which text?

PM Chou: You look it over and we will discuss it tomorrow. How about the President's trip? When should we announce that? That is up to you to decide.

Dr. Kissinger: Let me discuss it with the President, and we will propose it in Paris. Toward the middle or the end of November, around the 15th of November.

PM Chou: The Acting Foreign Minister thinks the end of November would be better.

Dr. Kissinger: The only problem we have is that the press will begin to say again that there are great tensions between us, and that the trip is in great difficulty.

PM Chou: (laughs) Then wouldn't the end of October be better?

Dr. Kissinger: No, we can hold them for about two or three weeks with this announcement. (Chou laughs) Let's say around November 20th if that's easier for you.

PM Chou: You mean it will be too difficult for you at the end of November?

Dr. Kissinger: There are two problems. One is the speculation on why we are not announcing it.

PM Chou: And what would be difficult for you if we put it earlier, toward the end of October?

Dr. Kissinger: The end of October? Only that the President will probably... We could do it in the first full week of November, just so that there is some separation between my trip and... We want to leave some time so that it appears that the President has had an opportunity to consider it. But if you want it around November 10 for example, it's also possible.

PM Chou: We also can consider it maybe, and discuss it later, because we also have some of our own requirements.

Dr. Kissinger: The only problem is the President will be away between November 24 and December 1 -- he is going to California; there's a holiday. But I think we can find a date. We can do it November 22 for example, which is the end of November.

PM Chou: We will consider it and discuss it again tomorrow.

Dr. Kissinger: Certainly. That's easy.

PM Chou: If we finish soon maybe tomorrow afternoon there could be another general meeting maybe with all of your staff. But if we take more time then maybe in the evening we can meet. But anyway we should meet.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. Maybe the Acting Foreign Minister would suggest a text for the announcement of the President's trip.

PM Chou: Yes, he can discuss it in that session.

Dr. Kissinger: The only problem is I am afraid it will be impossible in America not to give an exact date. Too many people will know; it will make it more mysterious if we don't give a date.

PM Chou: Do you have any draft?

Dr. Kissinger: No, for once, no.

PM Chou: You mean you would like to put the date in it?

Dr. Kissinger: No, not the one we now have; the one for the end of November. We will say the People's Republic and the United States have agreed that President Nixon's visit should start on February 21. We need say no more.

PM Chou: Alright.

Dr. Kissinger: Good. One question we haven't resolved is the airplane to be used when the President travels in China.

PM Chou: Of course, the best thing would be to go in our airplane, because I will be accompanying him.

Dr. Kissinger: And you will not go in an American plane?

PM Chou: Because it's on our territory.

Dr. Kissinger: I will discuss it with the President. It has never been done before, but no American President has ever visited China before.

PM Chou: We will be responsible, and your Secret Service men can also have a look in our plane, because everything will be all right.

Dr. Kissinger: I have no question.

PM Chou: Of course, I think you will understand that.

Dr. Kissinger: When I return, do you object if I give a background meeting with the press similar to the last one?

PM Chou: We don't have any objections. I heard they wouldn't let you go when you gave your last briefing.

Dr. Kissinger: They kept asking more and more questions.

PM Chou: Yes, but if you give them another one they perhaps will be satisfied.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. I can mention names of people who participated in the discussions because you mentioned it in your paper.

PM Chou: That's all right.

Dr. Kissinger: And I will only say we discussed concrete arrangements. I will not say we discussed specific topics, and when asked, I will only talk German philosophy.

PM Chou: (laughs) We heard that German philosophers always have to speak of whole systems, on a scale like that, so you will tire them out so much they will doze off.

Dr. Kissinger: They will think I am so profound that they won't realize I am not telling them anything.

PM Chou: They will be so tired they will let you off.

Dr. Kissinger: Two other things. We are going to conduct an underground nuclear test in the Aleutian Islands between October 28th and November 10. It will take only one day, only one test.

PM Chou: Between this span of time, you mean.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, only one explosion.

PM Chou: You are probably comparing with the Soviet Union which held a nuclear experiment in the Arctic Ocean.

Dr. Kissinger: I didn't know that -- when?

PM Chou: Also on the land in a place near the Arctic Ocean.

Dr. Kissinger: It is a test warhead for a defensive missile, for the ABM.

PM Chou: These are much too expensive things. Some day maybe others can declare like we have done that they will not be the first to use them. That will end these things. That is for you to consider. We put forward the idea.

Dr. Kissinger: I just wanted you to know. Will you tell me before we leave about the situation on the Asian subcontinent? I would like to discuss that and also some other things, but we need not get into this now.

PM Chou: Alright. That is all.