Peking's View of the Nixon Mission

P
resident Nixon's announcement that he would visit the People's Republic of China sometime before next May was one of the great diplomatic breaks of recent years. For two decades, until the first signs of thaw became visible early this year, virtually the only contact between the U.S. and mainland China had been the secret and endless exchanges of hostile rhetoric. The President's decision to undertake a personal mission to Peking opens an enormous door. Nixon is warning everyone not to expect too much (see The President, page 96). Yet worldwide speculation is inevitable about the impact of the trip on the Vietnam war, the future of Taiwan, the 1972 U.S. elections, the admission of Communist China to the U.N. and the future of our relations with the Soviet Union.

The fact that Nixon would be welcomed to visit China was first announced in late April in an article by Edgar Snow. Nixon reportedly told Chairman Mao Tse-tung that he was happy to talk with Nixon, "rather as a tourist or as President." Mao explained that "the problems between China and the U.S. would have to be solved with Nixon."

Edgar Snow, author of Red Star over China, probably has more firsthand information than any American—except perhaps Nixon—about Korea. Since what the Chinese leaders think about the U.S. today. He has reported sympathetically on the Chinese Communists since the beginning of their movement, and he was the knowledge of Mao, Chou En-lai and other leaders. His first book dates back to 1935. During a two-month stay in China last year he was photographed at Mao's side during the October Day parade (page 221), the only American ever to be so singled out.

On the following pages, Snow reports on the Chinese view of the forthcoming visit: why they decided to invite President Nixon; what they think of Nixon and Kissinger; what their bargaining priorities will be. Snow also offers a personal insight into the man who will do most of the negotiating with the American visitors, China's durable and knowledgeable Premier Chou En-lai.
China will talk from a position of strength

by EDGAR SNOW

What has happened since January 1965 to change Mao's mind? At that time I asked the Chairman whether there was any possibility that he might deliver to President Johnson, his message was plain. No! nothing more. From that moment, Mao said that he would not consider any proposal that might lead to a war in Southeast Asia. The United States had to be made to understand the consequences of their actions.

In that 1965 interview Mao had made it clear that he would not accept any proposals that would lead to a military confrontation. The United States had to understand the consequences of their actions.

The Chinese believe that the United States is responsible for creating the conditions that led to the war in Vietnam. They believe that the United States should accept the consequences of their actions.

In an interview earlier this year, Mao said that he had met with President Xi Jinping in October to discuss the future of China. Mao said that he believed in the principles of the United Nations and that China would continue to work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Middle East.

At their recent meeting, Kim Jong-un and President Xi Jinping discussed the situation in the Korean Peninsula. They agreed to continue their efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis.
Kissinger knows the language of both worlds

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licans demonstrated a "serious" desire to negotiate. To the initiated, "serious" meant, first of all, a realistic attempt to work out a program to deal with the Taiwan problem. At Mao and Diao

The announcement was made to the American public in a small, private ceremony at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C. The announcement was made by the President of the People's Republic of China, Chou En-lai, and was broadcast on radio and television throughout the country.

...and to be photographed at the anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. No American had ever been to China.

In 1977, Kissinger was in China on a secret mission for Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The mission was to negotiate the withdrawal of American forces from the American embassy in Bejing.

Richard Nixon was sworn in as the President of the United States on January 20, 1969. He was the first American president to visit China since the revolution of 1949.

In 1972, Nixon visited China for the first time. He met with Chinese leaders and discussed the possibility of normalizing relations between the two countries.

...he refused to go to China on a secret mission for Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The mission was to negotiate the withdrawal of American forces from the American embassy in Bejing.

...Kissinger knew the language of both worlds...
Chou will do the nitty-gritty work, Mao will have the final say

A likely candidate to be Chou’s successor is Vice-Premier Cheng Yi, who is known for his pragmatic approach to politics. Cheng Yi has long been associated with Chou, and has frequently been mentioned as a potential successor. He is suspected of having been Chou’s right-hand man for some time, and is likely to continue his policies in the new administration.

The appointment of Cheng Yi would be seen as a sign of continuity, and would help to reassure the Chinese people that the country is moving forward in a stable and predictable manner. It would also be a welcome development for the international community, which has long been concerned about the stability of the Chinese leadership.

However, with the passing of Chou, the responsibilities of running the country will fall on Mao’s shoulders. Mao is known for his decisive and sometimes controversial leadership style, and it is unclear how he will handle the challenges facing China.

Mao’s selection of a successor will be crucial in determining the future of the Chinese Communist Party, and the direction of the country under the leadership of the new generation. The appointment of Cheng Yi, or another candidate, will be closely watched by observers around the world.