

Nixon Legacy Forum Transcript:

The Opening to China

November 14, 2014
William G. McGowan Theater
National Archives Building in Washington D.C.

Panelists:

Jonathan Howe, Military Assistant to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (1969-1974)

Winston Lord, Assistant to the National Security Advisor (1970-1973)

Nicholas Platt, Staff Assistant to the Secretary of State (1971-1973)

Richard Solomon, National Security Council Staff for Asian Affairs (1971-1976)

Kathleen “Troia” McFarland (Moderator), Staff of the National Security Council (1970-1976)

David Ferriero: Good morning. I'm David Ferriero, the Archivist of the United States, and it's a pleasure to welcome you today to the William G. McGowan Theater here in Washington. And a special welcome to our C-SPAN audience, joining us from around the country and around the world. Today we have the latest in an ongoing series of Nixon Legacy Forums, which we co-sponsor with the Nixon Foundation and the Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, California.

When asked about his library when it was first being planned, President Nixon said, "I have insisted that the Nixon Library and birthplace be not a monument to the career of one man, but a place where visitors and scholars will be able to recall the events of the time I served as president, and to measure and weigh the policies my administration pursued. I hope the Nixon Library and birthplace will be different, a vital place of discovery and rediscovery, of investigation, of study, debate, and analysis." Those words will be our touchstone as we begin a major renovation of the permanent exhibit at the Nixon Library this year.

Except for the recently opened Watergate exhibit, the Nixon Library has been essentially unchanged since it opened in the summer of 1990. Over the last 24 years, there have been many changes and many advances in the techniques and technologies of museum display and interactivity, and in the volume of material now available. It will be an exciting and exhilarating exercise in bringing the 37th President into the 21st century.

Today's Nixon Legacy Forum is the 29th in the series. The idea is simple. Bring together some of the men and women who worked on various projects for President Nixon, reunite them with the papers they wrote, and then engage them in discussion about what it was like to be there, working in the Nixon White House.

The documentation at the Nixon Library regarding the opening of China, the papers and tape recordings, are particularly rich. These forums are not intended to be the definitive history of any subject. They are meant to be the building blocks of history. They are a unique opportunity to provide first-person input for current and future scholars and citizens who want to understand how the Nixon policies were really made, and how history really works.

Dean Acheson famously titled his memoirs "Present at the Creation," and the Nixon Library forums can make us fly through the walls of history. We are present, albeit at four decades remove, at the creation of some of the most momentous policy and events of the last century. Today's forum is a case in point, "The Opening of China." Few events are truly transformational, but President Nixon's determination to end the quarter century of what he's called "China's angry isolation" and to restore America's relations with the world's most populous nation count among them.

America and the world were transfixed with vivid images of the week that changed the world, when President Nixon went to China in February of 1972. Secretary of State Clinton recently remembered renting a small TV set, when TV sets still had adjustable rabbit-ear antennas, so she could watch the coverage in her room at the Yale Law School. She said that calling the Nixon trip to China "the week that changed the world" was an understatement. The world truly was different on February 28, 1972, the day President Nixon left China than it had been on February 21st, when he arrived.

Today's distinguished panelists all worked at the Nixon National Security Council and helped to prepare that momentous and transformational trip. Ron Walker, the Chairman of the Board of the President Richard Nixon Foundation, will introduce today's distinguished moderator and panelists. Please welcome Ron Walker.

Ron Walker: Thank you, David. Morning, everyone. The panel is going to come out. It's my pleasure to welcome everyone, along with David. It's really nice to see all these lovely faces out there.

Those of us on the White House staff in the '70s remember a young lady named Kathleen Troia. She was on the NSC Council at 18 years of age. She worked at night, doing the President's briefing for the next morning. She would ride her bicycle from George Washington University to the White House and work in the Situation Room. She went on to serve in the National Security post for President Ford and President Reagan.

In 1984, she wrote Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's memorandum, "The Uses of Military War." The speech, and she, received the Defense Department's highest civilian award for the work that she did during the Reagan Administration. Today, KT is a Fox News security analyst, and she hosts the FoxNews.com DEFCON3.

KT is moderating this series of Nixon Legacies for the 37th President of the United States on foreign policy. She will introduce the panel, which is a distinguished one, I might add, and all my friends. God bless.

KT McFarland: Thank you, Ron. Ron Walker is far too modest to mention it, but he played an essential role in President Nixon's opening to China. He did all the advance work for Nixon's trip, and it was groundbreaking in every way. It was the first time a prime-time presidential trip, overseas event, had happened in prime time. It was the first time American people saw China in over a generation. And it was the first time more than just a handful of Americans had ever been to China.

So Ron isn't a part of this panel today, but if you want to get a real behind-the-scenes look of Nixon's trip to China, you can read the book Ron's wife Anne wrote called "China Calls," by Anne Walker.

Anne Walker: Thank you.

KT McFarland: Well, thank you. Now, this is the second in a several-part series of forums as the Archivist said about the Nixon Administration's national security policy. Those five years that Nixon was in office have been considered one of the most fruitful times of American diplomacy, and really the golden age of American foreign policy, certainly of the century.

The last forum focused on how the National Security Council was organized, so foreign policy and decision making was restructured and focused in the National Security Council, and in Nixon's hands personally.

We're going to have future forums, and they're going to focus on détente and arms control with the Soviet Union and the end of the Vietnam War and the Paris Peace Accords, and probably a final forum on the lasting legacy of

the Nixon/Kissinger era. But this one is devoted to the opening to China. It is, as the Archivist said, the seminal event, changed the world, and I want to introduce you to the gentlemen who helped make it happen.

So joining us today first, Winston Lord. Winston joined Henry Kissinger's NSC staff at the very beginning of the Nixon Administration. He was one of Henry's closest advisers throughout the administration, and he worked on every aspect of American foreign policy. He was in and out of Kissinger's office several times a day.

He helped plan Henry Kissinger's secret trip to China in July '71, and he became a central role, not only in the trips to China, but then in the subsequent unfolding of American-Chinese foreign policy. He went on to become President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Assistant Secretary of State, and U.S. Ambassador to China.

Next is Dr. Richard Solomon. He was a University of Michigan professor and already a nationally renowned China scholar when Kissinger tapped him to join the National Security Council staff in September of 1971. Dick had a Ph.D. from my alma mater, MIT. He was a senior scholar at the prestigious Rand Corporation and spoke fluent Mandarin. He accompanied Henry Kissinger and deputy NSC adviser General Al Haig on numerous China trips, and he was also on President Nixon's 1972 trip to China.

Dick went on to hold senior positions in the State Department, negotiate the Cambodian peace treaty, and serve as Ambassador to the Philippines. He's written numerous books, and he remains one of America's leading sinologists. He recently stepped down as the President of the U.S. Institute of Peace, and not in retirement for a nanosecond, he is now the Senior Fellow at the Rand Corporation. Thank you.

Next to Dick is Ambassador Nicholas Platt. Unlike our other panelists, Ambassador Platt was not on Kissinger's National Security Council staff, although he was longtime friend and colleague of Winston Lord and Dick Solomon's.

Nick was a career foreign service officer, and one of the State Department's senior sinologists. He was also on the Nixon trip, but he was the Staff Assistant to then Secretary of State, William Rogers. Nick Platt went on to hold senior positions at the State Department, Defense, NSC, was ambassador to Namibia, the Philippines, and Pakistan. After leaving government, he has dealt extensively with the Chinese through the last 40 years.

Finally is Admiral Jonathan Howe, who was a young commander on Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff. He was Kissinger's military assistant. He was one of the only military officers on the staff, and the only naval officer, right? Then a lieutenant commander, Jon Howe graduated from the Naval Academy, spent most of his time at sea as a submariner and went on to a very distinguished career in the Navy, became a four-star admiral, and he was also President George H. W. Bush's Deputy National Security Adviser.

So these are pretty distinguished men who had great careers before they joined up with Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, and clearly continue to be in the forefront of the elite of American foreign policy going forward. I'd like to get right to it, though. I want to ask each of you how you happen to be associated with Henry specifically. How did Henry find you?

Winston Lord: Well, I was a Foreign Service officer originally, and I was working in the Pentagon in 1968 and the first person that Kissinger asked to join him on his staff was the head of the policy planning staff in the Pentagon where I was working, a man named Mort Halperin. So Halperin went over to join Kissinger and asked me to go with him. I had a quick interview with Henry and I guess I passed. The first year I was sort of a mini policy planning staff with Halperin, sending memos to Henry, many of them criticizing what he was doing, that's why I got his attention, and also running the NSC system. Then I became a special assistant in February '70, and I was fortunate because I was involved not only this but in the Vietnam negotiations, the Russian and Middle East initiatives as well.

KT McFarland: Dick, how did Henry find you?

Richard Solomon: I was recommended by the Council on Foreign Relations. David Rockefeller had set up an International Affairs Fellows program, and in March or April of 1971, I was recommended to Kissinger because he was taking scholars or recommendees from the Council on his staff. Actually, it was the second year of that program.

I got a letter in the spring of '71, this was before the secret trip, saying that I would be welcome to join the staff for a year as an academic in that context. And I was teaching the summer of '71 at Michigan in preparation for taking the year's leave, and I was as shocked as the world was when President Nixon got on television and announced that Kissinger had already been to China secretly.

Immediately I started getting phone calls from colleagues in the State Department, saying boy are you lucky, you're going to be in the middle of a

lot of very interesting things. I showed up at the end of the summer, and from that point on, I just became a member of that team. It worked out well enough so that I was asked to stay on beyond the first year, and ended up working for Kissinger, and then Scowcroft for five years.

KT McFarland: What about you? You were at the State Department, Nick. How did Henry find you?

Nicholas Platt: Well, I was thrown together with Henry when we were coordinating the papers for the Nixon trip. Secretary Rogers asked me to pull the papers together and I had worked in the Secretariat, and so I had some idea of how to do this, and I'd worked on China.

I brought over the papers to discuss them with William and with Henry himself. Henry was very anxious that we all be singing from the same sheet of music and so I was showing him our sheet of music to make sure that it was the same as his, and it was. Anyway, that was how we met.

KT McFarland: And what about you?

Jonathan Howe: Well, I had just finished two years of graduate school, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, in the Cambridge area. I took Kissinger's last course that he taught at Harvard on national security. That was a large seminar, he didn't know me from that. I had . . .

KT McFarland: Your brilliance hadn't shown through until later.

Jonathan Howe: I had orders to go back to a submarine, to be XO of a submarine, and I got a phone call from the Navy saying come to Washington, we can't tell you why, just come. Don't go back to New London right now. So I came, obviously. That turned out to be an interview with Haig and Kissinger, etc. I was very worried about wanting to go back to submarines and sort of bargaining, this is only going to be a year. When they finally brought me over, they said, "Well, this could be two years."

Four-and-a-half years later, I got back to the Navy, but I had a very enjoyable experience. The only reason he knew about me was that some professors, unbeknownst to me, that were advisers on my thesis, etc., had written to Kissinger and said this is somebody you ought to have. I never saw the letter, they never said anything to me at all. So it was totally out of the blue. But that's the reason that they learned who I was.

KT McFarland: Excellent. I'd like to start off now about setting the stage, with the historical record. Where was the United States in the late 1960s?

You think now about China, it's hard to think about a time when China wasn't a central player in the world events and world politics, and also a central player with the United States. But that wasn't the case in 1968, when Nixon ran for president, or in 1969, when Nixon took office.

Dick, why don't you set the stage for the historic perspective of the situation?

Richard Solomon: Well, here we are, 2014, a world that has been totally transformed since the era of the Nixon initiative. We're almost a half a century away from President Nixon making the first moves to establish contact with the Chinese. Today, the Soviet Union is history, China is now approaching certainly number two if not number one in the world economy. It has emerged, risen as an international force, in no small measure because of the opening that President Nixon and Chairman Mao initiated.

But let's go back very briefly to what the world looked like when the Soviet Union and China had allied themselves. Chairman Mao, right after the conclusion of the Revolution, had established a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union.

So Eurasia, from Eastern Europe all the way to the Pacific Ocean, was controlled and dominated by a hostile alliance. It was a fundamental threat to American security, and that threat persisted and was certainly one of the motivations for the Vietnam War involvement.

But as the 1960s progressed, there were signs of real tension between Moscow and Beijing. Mr. Nixon, who was at that point of course out of office, would have been aware of these tensions. He was also very much aware of the degree to which the Vietnam War had undermined political support for the Lyndon Johnson administration. Indeed, it got so bad that, as you know, President Johnson decided not to run for a second term.

So in the second half of the '60s, Mr. Nixon, anticipating that he might run for office, started to think how do I prevent my administration, should it happen, from being entrapped in the Vietnam quagmire. He made a trip through Asia in 1967 and he wrote a really fascinating article in the journal "Foreign Affairs" that hinted at not only the desire to get out of Vietnam, because the title of the article was "Asia After Vietnam," but he hinted that it was important to try to draw China into the international community. So this was very much in his head. So he was thinking "how do I construct a policy to deal with this situation?"

The brilliance of what he put together was, he could see the tensions between the two Communist states. He thought that might be the basis for splitting that alliance. He was looking for a way to accelerate or gain some leverage on getting out of the Vietnam situation.

So as he prepared to run for office, he was talking publicly about he had a secret plan to end the Vietnam War. He didn't mention China, but frankly, there was more than a little guffawing, at least on the Michigan campus. Sure, Nixon has a secret plan to get out of Vietnam. But he really did.

His game plan is one of the great strategic maneuvers, certainly in American foreign policy, and I would say in international politics of the 20th century. Because what finally transpired, the breakthrough, to improve relations with China and all that followed, fundamentally transformed the political dynamic of the Cold War, certainly to America's advantage.

It put the Soviet Union on the defensive, and it laid the basis for China's international engagement, which then played out over decades, not only after Mao but Deng Xiaoping.

KT McFarland: Winston, when you were on the National Security Council, leading up to the secret trips, so you were already there, you were already Kissinger's assistant, did they talk to you about this? Did you know that that was in Nixon's mind from the very beginning?

Winston Lord: Yes. I got fully briefed when I became special assistant in February, 1970. But as we'll get to later, in the first week of Nixon's term, he sent a memo to Kissinger saying let's get in touch with the Chinese. But let me just follow up on what Dick has just said in terms of the impulses by both sides to get together after 22 years of mutual hostility and isolation.

In addition to the foreign scene that Dick has painted, there's also the domestic scene that Nixon inherited, 550,000 troops in Vietnam, tension with a nuclear rival, the Soviet Union. No contact with one fifth of the world's people, and at home, you had riots, assassinations and people being disillusioned with executive power and particularly the Vietnam War.

So the first impulse, I think the most broad impulse of Nixon opening to China, was to show the world and to show the American people that we were not bogged down in Vietnam, that our diplomacy could flourish despite the incredible context that he inherited. To break out of this mold that the U.S. no longer could be a world leader, despite Vietnam and, as a corollary to that, to lift the spirits of the American people over many years.

He knew that any exit from Vietnam was going to be messy and ambiguous. He thought if he opened with China, this huge country, the drama and the importance of dealing with that giant would put in perspective the rather messy exit from Vietnam. So let's not underestimate the broad diplomatic breakthrough and achievement for his foreign policy in general, and what he did with the American people's morale.

More specifically, number one, he wanted to improve relations with the Soviet Union, and the best way to do that was to get their attention by going to China. Number two, he wanted help in ending the Vietnam War, as you suggested, figuring that if he opened with China and then with Russia, that Hanoi would see that it was being somewhat isolated by its two big patrons, who were interested in bilateral relations with us. He also, over time, wanted greater stability in Asia generally. Those were his objectives.

On the Chinese side, they had two major objectives. One, their concern about their polar bear, northern neighbor. They'd had these clashes along the Ussuri River. They saw Brezhnev in '68 declare the Brezhnev Doctrine and take over Czechoslovakia, in effect saying we'll run the Communist world. They were concerned about the Soviets, and secondly, they were totally isolated. Because of the Cultural Revolution, they withdrew all but one of their ambassadors from abroad. So their twin objectives were balance the Russians and break out of their isolation. Here's a classic case where both sides achieve their goals, essentially.

Within weeks of the secret trip and Nixon's announcement, Moscow agreed to a summit meeting with Nixon as well. They had been dragging their feet for a year or two, and we had a Berlin agreement, we had an arms control agreement, we had made a major breakthrough with the Russians.

Secondly, it did help us put pressure on Vietnam, but that was a much longer operation. Certainly, in terms of American diplomacy, as I've said, it showed that we were a major act on the world stage again, and of course it greatly enhanced Nixon's popularity. So it achieved our major objectives.

The Chinese, in turn, balanced the Soviet Union, got some security against them and they broke out of their isolation. They knew that if we opened up with them, then Japan – which had been holding back – and Europe, would go ahead with normal relations. They would get into the United Nations, which they did in October, 1971. This was a major move obviously, for the reasons Dick has mentioned, and it's also a case of a win-win situation in international diplomacy.

KT McFarland: But who were the losers? And Nick, you were at the State Department and our relations with China were with Taiwan, were not with Red China, it was called at the time.

Nicholas Platt: No.

KT McFarland: Were we selling China out, the China which was Taiwan?

Nicholas Platt: Well, we were sticking strictly to the policy of supporting Taiwan. I was in the China desk when the transition between Johnson and Nixon took place. One of my tasks was to write a history of Lyndon Baines Johnson's achievements in China policy. Now, this was a slim volume at best, but it gave me a chance to look in the files and see all of the different initiatives that we had worked on, sent forward to Dean Rusk, which were then sent back. The change when Nixon came in was palpable. We were asked by the Secretary's office to brush off the various initiatives that we made on cultural exchange and sports and education and so on. So we sent them forward, and they disappeared. They must have gone to the White House. Anyway, we didn't have a clue what was going on, with being . . .

KT McFarland: So the State Department was kept out of what was roiling at the Pentagon.

Nicholas Platt: We were not privy to what Nixon and Kissinger and Win Lord were cooking up.

Winston Lord: Let me interject quickly, though. These papers were absolutely crucial for the preparation for Kissinger's trip and Nixon's trip because we weren't filled with a lot of China experts. John Holdridge is somewhat of one. Unfortunately, he's not with us. We relied a lot on some of the background and papers that were sent to us, even though they didn't know why they were sending them.

Nicholas Platt: No, we just were doing our job, and we sent them, but those of us who had read the Nixon article and those of us who were sensitive to these different vibrations realized that something was up. We didn't know what it was, but something was up. Of course, there were a lot of intelligence analyses going on. I spent some time doing that, and particularly in the context of the clashes between the Soviet Union and China along the border. And these . . .

KT McFarland: This was in 1969.

Nicholas Platt: This was '69. We wrote reports and the policy implications were that they were going to improve the atmosphere for China and the United States to get together. This began the period of winking that went on, and signs at the Warsaw talks and so on and so forth.

There were some very public aspects to Nixon's policies. They were relaxations of trade and travel restrictions and things like that, which laid the groundwork for what was going on behind the scenes.

KT McFarland: Dick?

Richard Solomon: But let me just add that the University of Michigan campus was in turmoil through the late '60s, because . . .

KT McFarland: Right, with the antiwar demonstrations.

Richard Solomon: ...tremendous fear of getting drawn into another war with China, as we had in the Korean War period, because of the Vietnam conflict. So there was tremendous tension building over would we get involved in another conflict with China.

There was an organization set up, just as I began my teaching my career, in '66 called the National Committee on U.S. - China Relations, where the academic community was trying to find ways to avoid another clash with China. So the public mood, and I'm sure Winston will get off into this, was primed for some breakthrough that would relieve that fear, that tension that we'd be drawn into another war with China.

KT McFarland: What I'd like to do now is talk about the steps leading up to. Nick, you talked about some of the signals that were being sent. You talked about, Dick, the fear that the United States was somehow going to drift into another war with China after the Korean War.

So in 1969, 1970, China was one of America's archenemies. Understandably, then, the world was shocked when Nixon went on television from San Clemente in July of '71 and said, "Henry Kissinger has just completed a secret trip to China." President Nixon would himself go visit China several months later.

That secret trip, how did that get organized? We didn't have diplomatic relations. You couldn't pick up the phone and say, "Hello, Zhou Enlai, we'd like to come visit." Talk us through the steps, public moves, private moves.

Winston Lord: Well, we had a double challenge from the beginning in '69, knowing we wanted to move toward China. First, there was the public signals that had to be sent, both so China would pick up these signals, and our publics and other countries would begin to get used to the idea that we were moving in a different direction.

So as has been pointed out by Nick, we relaxed trade and travel restrictions, I won't give all the chronology here, but we did other things. The President, in a toast with the Romanian head of state, used the phrase "People's Republic of China." No president had ever used that phrase before.

We made certain references in the President's annual foreign policy reports, which came out February every year, in which we indicated a further direction. So the beauty of these gestures were they were unilateral. They did not require a response from the Chinese. We were not negotiating in public. But they could be noted by the Chinese leaders as well as the other audiences that I mentioned.

The other problem is to get in touch with them, as you say. So we began to look for secret intermediaries, because we had no direct contact. We tried Charles de Gaulle of France briefly. We tried Romania, which got fairly interesting for a while.

We were trying various channels to see which ones the Chinese would pick up, that they were most comfortable with, and they settled on Pakistan, which was a close friend of theirs and was close to us in the Cold War.

So we had begun to condition the publics, and then we had set up the secret channel. So then we had a series of . . .

KT McFarland: Talk to me about what the secret channel is.

Winston Lord: Yeah, I will.

KT McFarland: Did you say to the President of Pakistan, "We'd like to get in touch with the Chinese"?

Winston Lord: The President of Pakistan said, he came on a state visit and said he'd be willing to be the intermediary. So we began, the way it would happen is that Zhou Enlai would write a message, get it to the Pakistanis, they would send it to their ambassador in Washington, who would come in and see Kissinger – and I was always there – with the handwritten notes or typed notes from Zhou Enlai. Then we'd go back the same way.

Now, what was important in this was not only to converge on an agreement for a trip and decide who was going to go on that trip. It ended up being Kissinger, with great reluctance, of course, but so anyway he was chosen . .

KT McFarland: A number of Kissinger's staff members are here, which is why you're getting that chuckle.

Winston Lord: But the key issue was that China wanted just to talk about Taiwan. We'd had talks in Geneva and Warsaw over many years, and by the way, another signal was we tried to get our ambassador, Walter Stoessel, to run down the Chinese ambassador in Warsaw, and he couldn't catch up with him. But that was another signal.

So what we had to do was make sure that if anybody went to China, which was a very risky geopolitical and political gamble, that the agenda would be a lot broader than the very sticky issue of Taiwan. So the key issue to be worked out in private was to make sure the agenda was broad, and once the Chinese agreed to a broader agenda, that's when we settled on a trip.

I'll make one last comment, then I want my colleagues to weigh in. There was one public event that was important, the famous ping pong diplomacy. The timing was crucial, because we had gone back and forth through the Pakistani channel but we had not heard back from the Chinese. I may not have my dates exactly right, but about the beginning of 1971, we hadn't heard anything for two or three months. So we were beginning to get a little antsy.

Then you have the American ping pong team for a world championship in Tokyo, and the Chinese invite them to the mainland. This was Mao's personal idea, by the way, and it did several things. One, it told the world, not to mention his own cadres and domestic audience, that he was going to reach out to the U.S., more subtly than just the ping pong initiative. Secondly, it was a public answer to our private channels, which we had not heard back from. Thirdly, however, there was a veiled fist here, namely if we don't sort of engage with him, he can put pressure on us through public opinion, like this ping pong diplomacy.

So we got the picture, and in fact, about two weeks later, we did get the crucial message, late April, through the Pakistani channel, setting up the Kissinger trip.

Richard Solomon: Winston, let me just add that the Chinese had put out their own signal. In October of 1970, Chairman Mao invited Edgar Snow . . . who you know had become famous for his book, written during the civil war

period, "Red Star over China" . . . invited Edgar Snow to meet with him and appear on the Tiananmen Gate for this National Day parade. Edgar Snow then wrote an article that appeared in "LIFE Magazine." This is the fall of 1970. And my understanding is the message really didn't get through.

Winston Lord: No, we didn't . . .

Richard Solomon: The mindset on all sides was so negative, and then probably because of the internal turmoil in China, the Cultural Revolution, there may have been a period of pullback.

Nicholas Platt: There were some others that had signals going on. We had suggested that the Warsaw talks actually be moved to the embassies. They had previously taken place for years . . .

KT McFarland: Now, what were the Warsaw talks? Go back and... .

Nicholas Platt: The Warsaw talks were talks that we'd had with the Chinese for decades about prisoner exchanges, mainly. It was our only sort of direct contact with the Chinese during those years. They had been in abeyance for some time. They were also very public. They were in a place called the Myślewicki Palace, which was eminently bug-able, and the gossip was that a taxi going by could tune into the Warsaw talks.

So the suggestion was that we move the Warsaw talks into embassies, one month in one embassy, one month in another, and that process actually began. But it was interrupted. I think the interruption, which Winston's been talking about, came about as a reaction to the invasion of Cambodia, which in fact put things on hold.

Winston Lord: We called it an incursion at the time. This was in '70.

Nicholas Platt: Call it as you wish, but in any case, the Chinese saw it as a reason to slow down.

KT McFarland: What have you got, Jon, because you were in the military at that time. How are you seeing this?

Jonathan Howe: I just want to underline one thing that has been said. I think there was a serious Chinese concern about the Russians and what was happening on their border and the buildup of almost a million troops and so forth, and some clashes that were occurring.

In Mao's mind and the Chinese leadership mind, they really were very concerned that this was a serious threat to them. Getting along with the Americans, they didn't feel we were territorial, ambitious, etc., etc., but they felt the Russians would be. So this is a motivating factor to keep this start, and keep it going and keep these contacts and see what might be possible.

KT McFarland: Elaborate a little more on that, because we think of the triangular diplomacy of the United States, Soviet Union, and China, we think we were running that game. But what you're implying is that the Chinese were looking at this triangle, looking to see if they could find a new alliance.

Jonathan Howe: Yeah, and the U.S. might be someone they could depend on more than the Russian part of that triangle.

Winston Lord: It was interesting, by the way, in the midst of this, the Russians made an overture to Nixon and Kissinger, saying why don't we gang up on the Chinese, and Nixon didn't think that was a particularly good idea.

KT McFarland: When was this?

Winston Lord: This would have been in the summer . . .

KT McFarland: Before the secret trip.

Winston Lord: ...the summer of '69, actually. Summer of '69, when they were having these tensions along the border.

Nicholas Platt: Right. There were National Security study memos being circulated and talked about, within the bureaucracy, which talked about relations with China, relations with Russia. They were hotly debated. There was also a big argument within the community, the intelligence community, in which I was involved, which discussed the question of whether or not nuclear castration of China was possible by Russia. That's how serious it got.

KT McFarland: It would be a Sino-Soviet nuclear war.

Nicholas Platt: Yeah.

Winston Lord: In this respect and with regard to the Soviet Union, several of our top Kremlinologists . . . and I'm going to get the names wrong, but I believe, and if I'm wrong it could be corrected, but including Chip Olin and George Cannon and some others . . . told Nixon that you should not move precipitously toward China, it'll hurt our relations with the Russians.

So he was being told by some Soviet experts not to move toward China, that it would hurt our relations. Of course Nixon, in his brilliance, knew that the best way to get Russia's attention and make a breakthrough was to move toward China, which of course is what happened.

KT McFarland: Let's explore, a little bit this triangular diplomacy, where the United States was playing one off against the other. Dick, why don't you weigh in on that?

Richard Solomon: Well, I don't know how explicitly this was conceived at the moment, but what emerged as the diplomacy unfolded is that we were in the favorable so-called "swing position", where the Soviets and the Chinese started, if you like, competing for good relations with us.

They had bad relations between themselves, so we were in the favorable position where we could respond to their interest and improve relations with the United States in a variety of ways, Winston has touched on this, related to the Vietnam situation, to trying to activate nuclear diplomacy with the Soviet Union.

So the strategic triangle as it emerged out of the Nixon initiative put the United States in a very favorable position. It's sort of interesting today to say well, is there a new dynamic to these triangle relations, but maybe it's the Chinese who would be in the stronger swing position, but that's . . .

KT McFarland: That's for another panel.

Richard Solomon: That's for another session, right.

KT McFarland: Talk about when you were working on these internal memoranda, Nixon, Kissinger, Winston Lord, etc., with this very small group of people, were you looking at that as this would be our opportunity to get both things that we wanted, an opening to China as well as arms control with the Soviet Union and an end to the Vietnam War?

Winston Lord: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Jonathan Howe: [Inaudible]

Winston Lord: And the way we played it . . . I want Jon to elaborate at some point, because he was crucial in playing the Soviet dimension with the Chinese, so he can get into that and he should. But basically, our strategy was to make the Russians anxious and nervous about our opening to China.

At the same time, to sort of demonstrate to the Chinese that we had more actual business with Moscow than we did with Beijing. We had a more normal relationship. We could have arms control, we could have grain agreements, we could have principles of international relations.

So the Chinese were a little antsy at the same time, and we would go out of our way, Kissinger would always go there after the Moscow summit or other Russian encounters and sort of brief them, both out of courtesy and reassure the Chinese, but also to make them a little bit nervous about the amount of business we had with them. Then of course, we shared our views on Soviet military strengths, and that's where Jon should come in at some point.

KT McFarland: What was the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union? We'll talk about that at a subsequent panel, but where were the pressure points there? What were we doing with the Soviet Union, arms control, and obviously Vietnam?

Jonathan Howe: Obviously we were in the Cold War, and the Russians, the Soviet Union was the main reason that there was a Cold War, and it was going on and intense. At the same time we were trying to open relations with the Soviet Union, arms control agreements, lots of these things, all sorts of agreements about how we can operate in this semi-hostile world, that law of the sea, there were whole bunch of things that were going on to try to improve that relationship. I think what's unusual is that, or amazing, actually, when you think the 1972, I know we'll get to that.

Here you have a presidential visit to China and two months later you have a presidential visit to Russia, and meetings at the highest levels, agreements, success in both areas. So this was an amazing buildup. The China trip was certainly the first part of it.

The Russians were the big providers for Vietnam, and they were pushing it. Vietnam obviously was a huge issue. Nixon had run for presidency, and like all presidents do when wars are on, saying I'll end that war if I get elected. Here we were and eventually we got to 1972 and the Vietnam War was not over, the agreement wasn't there, and so forth. This was really a dynamic era. When you look back and think of all the different things that went on, it is significant.

I think what Winston was trying to get to is that we were providing some information, once this relationship started, on these trips to let the Chinese know, specifically, what the Russians were doing. Obviously they have their

own intelligence. But at least to let them know through our satellites and other means . . .

KT McFarland: Right, which they would not have had access to.

Jonathan Howe: . . . where the alignment was, and we tried to give it very accurately and honestly. But it was a significant buildup and they were concerned about it.

Winston Lord: Let me add . . .

KT McFarland: Okay, keep going, guys.

Winston Lord: . . . that Jon was specifically the guy who presented this material to the Chinese. I would sit in, I was a spear carrier, but he was explaining to them, and this is all unclassified now, essentially, Russian deployments and so on.

One, other quick, point on the dynamics of the summits. We had asked the Soviets for a summit throughout 1970, and we were still asking. As we took off, Haig was holding the fort for Kissinger back in Washington, and he called on the Soviet Ambassador, Dobrynin and gave him one last chance to agree to a summit. We would have gone to Moscow first. Once again, Dobrynin said no, we're not quite ready for it, and we had left word with Haig to call us. We were on a public trip, leading up to the secret trip, we were in Southeast Asia and South Asia. The idea Haig was to call us and see how this came out with Dobrynin. So I got on the phone, I think it was either Thailand or Vietnam, and I got the call from Haig. He gave me some code language that a six-year-old could figure out what he was saying, I think it wasn't very subtle. But basically he said the Russians have turned us down. So of course we went to China first, and then the Russians agreed within weeks to a summit meeting after that.

KT McFarland: Let's go . . .

Nicholas Platt: Meanwhile, let me say, meanwhile . . .

KT McFarland: Back at the State Department.

Nicholas Platt: Meanwhile, let me say that when the campaign to get Chinese into the U.N. was gathering momentum and the State Department, saluting, as always, was mounting a massive campaign to lobby against this . . .

KT McFarland: Oops.

Nicholas Platt: . . . and in favor of Taiwan. So that was also what was going on. In the meantime, I was asked, as the head of the China watching part of the State Department, to write a memo on what kind of a member of the U.N. China would make.

So there were all of these different currents going . . .

Richard Solomon: This was China in a bull shop, wasn't it? Well, that was the real title of a memo.

KT McFarland: Let's switch to the secret trip to China. So Winston, you said you were doing these various initiatives to try to find somebody from the Chinese government, you had these secret memos that were going back and forth on a piece of paper. What happened, how did Kissinger get to China without the world knowing?

Winston Lord: It could never happen again, let's face it. He was scheduled for a public trip to Vietnam, Thailand, India, and Pakistan. We were in a small plane, and I'll never forget this. We had three different types of briefing books. There was a briefing book for four people who were going into China. There was a briefing book for those four but also a couple more, a guy named Hal Saunders, a Middle East expert, who were going to not go to China, but had to know what was going on to help cover up where the hell we were, when we were supposed to be in Pakistan. Then there was a briefing book that had no idea we were going to China.

So we had three different briefing books, which I was in charge of. I would just finish updating it, go to sleep, and Kissinger would wake up and make me redo all three again. I had to make sure each person got the right briefing book. So that was a lot of fun.

To make a long story short, my colleagues are going to groan here, but I have to explain to the audience and to history that Kissinger was not the first person into China after 22 years. You've all heard it, I'm sorry. But I was first because we were flying . . . It's true, it's absolutely true, and Kissinger admits it in his memoirs. We were flying on a secret . . .

KT McFarland: That's because Kissinger thought somebody might be shooting when you walked off the plane.

Winston Lord: That's right.

Jonathan Howe: You were his taster.

Winston Lord: I'll leave you in suspense on that and just double back for a minute. The idea was that when we got to Pakistan, Kissinger was going to get sick with a stomachache, supposedly go to a hill station, and while he was supposedly there we were going to sneak off for 48 hours to Beijing.

A couple problems. On the plane, as we were in India, Kissinger got a real stomachache. So we had to pretend he wasn't sick because he figured it wouldn't work.

So then we get there, and by the way, we interviewed a couple of Pakistani doctors to make sure they could go up and take care of so-called Kissinger who was being impersonated by a Secret Service man up in this hill station. I asked one doctor, "Do you know what Kissinger looks like?" He said, "Oh yeah, of course." So I said, "You're the wrong doctor." So we get on the plane, there are some Chinese there to meet us.

Now you've been in suspense, but no American had been there, no official, for 22 years. We're in a Pakistani plane, so everybody in the front was Pakistani. I was in the back of the plane with Kissinger and a couple of others. As we headed toward Chinese air space, I went to the front of the plane, Henry was in the back, and so I was the first person into China. Now he elbowed me aside when we got off the plane, but I was still number one. All right.

So we spent 48 hours, so the picture you're seeing is the first night at dinner during the secret trip. On the American side, on the lower left, and you have John Holdridge, who was absolutely crucial to the whole opening, Henry himself, and then Dick Smyser, who was our Vietnam expert, because that was a major dimension. Then you have Zhou Enlai over on the right hand side.

We spent 48 hours there, in total secrecy, essentially examining what an agenda might look like, whether we could in fact have a meaningful presidential trip, because we were exploring new terrain. Also a short announcement announcing the trip by both sides. But that got to be difficult because the Chinese wanted to make it look like Nixon was dying to go to China. In fact, he had made some comments earlier in his life that he'd like to go to China. And we wanted to make it look like the Chinese were dying to have him come to China. So that actually took several hours and it was rather hair-raising because we only had a few hours left to work out that actual brief announcement that Nixon made in San Clemente later on.

So I'll just end up on that, except to say a couple of amusing things on that trip as we flew in to China. You would think Kissinger was worried about meeting Zhou Enlai, the James Bond aspect of the secrecy, the geopolitical earthquake that he was about to unveil. No, no, no, no, no. He was worried about he had no shirts. His staff assistant forgot to pack any shirts, so . . .

KT McFarland: He was supposed to be in his pajamas, he was going to be sick.

Winston Lord: So Henry was really upset. I don't blame him, this is a big event. He borrowed John Holdridge's shirt. John Holdridge is about six-two, so Henry went around looking like a penguin, and the shirt had a label that said "Made in Taiwan."

Richard Solomon: Let me just make one comment from the Chinese point of view. What was not known was during this secret visit, there was an ally of Communist China also in Beijing, and that was Kim Il-Sung, and Zhou Enlai had the problem of shuttling back and forth between meeting with Kissinger and his party and dealing with their ally, North Korea.

The Chinese leadership was really balancing off what it was trying to do with the United States against its alliance relationships, not just with North Korea but also with Vietnam.

Immediately after the Kissinger party departed, Zhou Enlai first flew back to Pyongyang to brief Kim Il-Sung on what had happened and then they communicated to the Vietnamese, who were outraged. They talked about betrayal in the socialist movement. But from the Chinese point of view, the diplomacy that was associated with this initiative was very complicated.

KT McFarland: Let's explore a little bit more what was going on in China at the time. The Cultural Revolution, the coup attempts. So from their perspective, could only Mao be the one to do this deal? What was Mao and Zhou Enlai, what were they dealing with at home? They must have had a lot of criticism among their own people.

Richard Solomon: Well, Nick may want to jump in here, but . . .

KT McFarland: Yeah, everybody jump in, by the way.

Richard Solomon: . . . but the fact was it was an enormous political risk for both Mao and for Richard Nixon. One would have to say that Nixon managed his internal politics more effectively. Because after the secret initiative, there was a coup attempt by the man who, we thought had been designated as

Mao's successor, the defense minister Lin Biao. We now know that, I forget the exact date, but after this coup attempt, Lin Biao got in a plane, fleeing, fearing arrest. The plane crashed in Mongolia.

Winston Lord: It was, I think, October, '71, I think, when we were there, and there was very heavy police presence. We didn't know why. It had already happened.

Richard Solomon: I think it had already happened.

Winston Lord: September it probably happened.

Richard Solomon: But we later got the intelligence reporting that there were people in the Chinese leadership who were strongly opposed to this initiative. They kept referring to Mao as the B-52, the heavy bomber of their politics.

Probably those included what later became known as the Gang of Four, because Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and others were opposed to some of the developments that had brought influence to Zhou Enlai, worried about the future of the Revolution.

This is, again, gets beyond the immediate story, but beginning around 1974, particularly after Zhou Enlai was ill, was replaced by Deng Xiaoping, the so-called Gang of Four had some real influence on this dialogue with the U.S., and the mood turned a bit sour.

But one aspect of it, just to link it to the comment earlier about intelligence sharing, the Chinese became antsy that we were taking them for granted because we were trying to make them aware of the Soviet threat. So they tried to say to us don't worry about us, we can take care of ourselves. They developed a public slogan that the Soviet revisionists, the Soviet Union, was preparing to attack in the east, that is toward China, but they really were going to attack in the west, against American interests. As a way of trying to say to their own people and probably to us, we can take care of ourselves.

Winston Lord: Nick may want to talk a little bit about the impact on other countries . . .

KT McFarland: Yeah.

Winston Lord: . . . as a result of this, we . . . because it wasn't all happiness.

KT McFarland: Did you start getting blowback? So Kissinger's secret trip was in July of 1971, and Nixon didn't go until February of 1972. What was the blowback from our allies, Japan, Taiwan, any of the Europeans?

Nicholas Platt: Well, after the trip, after Nixon's trip, our guys fanned out to various parts of Asia.

KT McFarland: But not before Nixon's trip, not after Kissinger's trip.

Nicholas Platt: The Japanese were particularly shocked, because we hadn't told them. We were their closest ally and we hadn't told them. This was something very important to them in their backyard. Well, they got over it and their immediate reaction was to immediately normalize their relations with China and become the major channel to China, travel channel to China, in subsequent years.

I think that the reaction of the right in the United States was very negative, and . . .

KT McFarland: This was the Taiwan lobby.

Nicholas Platt: Yeah.

KT McFarland: This was the Goldwater lobby.

Nicholas Platt: . . . and very negative. And of course after the trip, Warren Christopher was given the task of going to Taiwan and explaining what we'd done, and what he got was his car got pelted with eggs and a variety of other things. So they were very upset. But the blowback from the secret trip was essentially shock.

Winston Lord: Well, I ought to say we paid a certain price for secrecy, particularly with Japan. But having said that, I think it was felt necessary because if there had been public signals in advance . . . First of all, we didn't know whether this was going to be this successful. This was uncharted terrain, so you didn't want to raise expectations and have it defeat.

Secondly, if people knew in advance Henry was going to China, every lobbyist, not only Taiwan but everyone else would be coming in, and our allies, and we would be constrained in what we could explore with the Chinese once we got there. So the decision was made we had to keep it secret.

I think in retrospect, we might have sent a low-level person like Holdridge or me to Japan and tell the prime minister, just so he could say to everybody I knew in advance. The problem with that is that he would have to tell his Cabinet, and the Japanese press would get hold of it, and so the Chinese would feel we had betrayed the secret principle. So it was a tough trade-off, but I think on balance, despite the short-term price we paid, it was worth it.

KT McFarland: What about the reaction of the Vietnamese, our allies in the Vietnam War, after the Kissinger secret trip?

Jonathan Howe: I think they were shocked and concerned about it. Of course, after the President's trip had occurred, some different reactions happened. For example, because Vietnam really was a significant problem for us, I mean for President Nixon. He had said he would end it, he wanted to, there were negotiations going on.

KT McFarland: He had also seen the previous president, Lyndon Johnson, have his presidency almost destroyed by the Vietnam War.

Jonathan Howe: Right. But in these conversations during the President's trip, if I could just move to that, the last conversation with Zhou Enlai and President Nixon, Nixon had been talking about Vietnam and Chinese support for it, etc. Nixon and Zhou Enlai sort of made a diplomatic thing, we were not really going to meddle with that. Nixon just sort of nailed it. He said, "So you're not going to help us with the Vietnamese?" And he basically said yes. Then that passed and President Nixon said, "Well, you at least will help us, won't you, in reaching a negotiated solution, and not try to torpedo the negotiations, as your Russian friends are doing, etc."

So we were at least trying to say please encourage them to negotiate, and President Nixon said, "The negotiated solution is the only answer. There isn't a military answer to it." It just, sort of, was left that way. So the Vietnamese, from what we could tell at least, were in real shock that the President of the United States had been there. They didn't know what Zhou Enlai had said, obviously, back and forth, but they had their suspicions. So they were very concerned. Well, what do they do?

Well, they launched an offensive, this was the end of February, they launched an offensive in late April, actually. This caused us to respond by doing something that was very nasty in the Russian standpoint, because they were the main provider, although the Chinese were letting these transports go through China, etc., but the shipping and so forth.

We did the mining of Haiphong Harbor, the North Vietnamese ports, and a lot more intensive bombing, in response to this major campaign that they started in the South and they weren't negotiating.

So they were not impressed, in the sense . . . I think they already had a campaign in mind, and this is why we responded. The President, this was very courageous, and it's a little off the mark, but he had the summit with the Russians was already scheduled, and he knew that they might cancel that whole summit, which would have been a blow for many directions.

So when the difficult decision was made, and it was contested among those who knew about it, but the joint chiefs, Admiral Moorer, etc., were pushing for it. President Nixon decided yes, we are going to do this and if it means that the Russian summit is cancelled, that's fine.

We went ahead and did it, really minor blowback from the Russians, because I think they really wanted to have the summit, as well, on their side. The Chinese complained, but not too seriously because they sort of had put Vietnam, that's down here. We're talking big things, and we've got big plans together.

Winston Lord: A few quick footnotes. I don't want to get off too much on the Russian summit, but Nixon didn't want to go to Moscow with this tremendous offensive and our not responding to it, he looked very weak in terms of what was happening in Vietnam.

Secondly, he was about the only one – Kissinger and most others thought that the Russians would cancel the summit. I remember flying in a helicopter with Henry up to Camp David to start writing the President's speech on the Haiphong Hanoi moves, and we were bemoaning the fact that all this careful preparation for arms control and a summit were going to go down the tubes. Nixon said no, the Russians will go ahead. So that's to his credit.

With the Chinese, the basic pitch was, you've got a big stake in bilateral relationships. We knew they had a little bit of problems with Vietnam, historically, anyway. You don't want us to be humiliated on the way out of Vietnam, that's not going to help us balance the Soviet Union with you.

So tell the Hanoi to settle for a military settlement only. We're willing to have a ceasefire, withdraw all of our troops, get our prisoners back. We're not willing to overthrow the Saigon government, and that's not in your interest to have us humiliated.

So lean on your friends to be more reasonable for a military solution only, and you can tell them, in effect, time is on their side if they just wait it out. There's evidence that Zhou Enlai and others did press Hanoi, less evidence that the Russians did, because we were also pressing them to do this.

KT McFarland: Let's switch forward then to Nixon's trip, because that's the week that changed the world. I think that it's very difficult, sitting today, to understand what a profound and significant effect this had, not just on the world but on the American people, on the Chinese people. Nixon's week-long trip in February of 1972, Nixon himself called "the week that changed the world." As the Archivist said, even Secretary Clinton has said that was an underestimation of the profound significance of it. Before the trip we were their enemies, and after the trip, we were their friends.

Walk us through that whole week and exactly . . . You all four were on the trip to China, Nixon's trip to China. What happened? How did it end up with Nixon sitting down with archenemy Mao Zedong, who – Nixon had spent his entire career as an anti-Communist.

Winston Lord: Well, first, let me say I've dealt with lots of presidents and lots of summits. I have never seen anybody work as hard or as brilliantly for a summit as Nixon did for this trip. He knew its significance. With the great help of the State Department and the military and the CIA, we had six big briefing books. I was in charge of sort of orchestrating them all. They were this thick. I swear to God, Nixon marked up almost every page of all six volumes.

As we were flying out there, we stopped in Guam and Hawaii, and all the way on Air Force One, he was sending memos back to the back of the plane saying, I want some more information on this, and so this guy was really prepared.

We get to China, we're in the guest house. After one hour, Zhou Enlai comes over and says Mao wants to see Nixon right away. This was very unusual, he usually sees leaders at the end of their trips. It was very important, because he was putting his imprimatur on this for the world and for his cadres and for the Chinese people, that he blessed this trip and it was important.

He wasn't going to wait to the outcome. So to my eternal gratitude, Henry asked me to go along with him. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State was not invited.

Nicholas Platt: I stayed with the Secretary of State while he was not in that meeting.

KT McFarland: Great consolation, I'm sure, to the Secretary of State.

Richard Solomon: Such a great, a loyal guy.

Winston Lord: So anyway, let me talk about the meeting. First, you have a temptation when you know someone's a great historical figure to say, "This guy's got magnetic strength." But I would say if we walked into a cocktail party and we didn't know who he was, the guy would still draw your attention.

KT McFarland: He would own the room.

Winston Lord: Yeah. He would own the room. We actually, after the hour-long meeting, were somewhat disappointed initially, we meaning Kissinger and me. Because Nixon kept trying to talk about substance and policy, and Mao would sort of say, that's up to Zhou Enlai, and he'd give a brushstroke or two about the Russians, about Taiwan, about Japan, but he wouldn't engage the President. So we sort of thought this was a little disappointing, frankly.

As we went through the next few days with Zhou Enlai, we realized just how subtle Mao had been. That, in his brushstrokes and seeming casualness, he had gotten from one topic to another, and gave just enough guidance and framework for the subsequent discussions. So we really appreciated the meeting afterwards.

Richard Solomon: Wasn't there an expectation of a follow-on meeting?

Winston Lord: Yeah. We thought, naïvely, Mao never gives two meetings, that certainly the Secretary of State would have been invited to that and so on. Now, very quickly, this picture is proof that I was actually there, because at the end of the meeting, they came in with this picture and communiqués about the three of us being there for the American side, and Nixon turned to Zhou Enlai and said, "No, Mr. Lord was never here."

So they cut me out of the pictures, out of the communiqué, correctly, because it's humiliating enough for the Secretary of State not to be there with the National Security Adviser present, but to have some 30-year-old punk there as well, and he's not there, it really would have been over the top. So a year later, the Chinese gave me this picture to prove that in fact I was in it.

KT McFarland: What were all the rest of you doing while Winston was with Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong, and the President?

Nicholas Platt: I was sitting with Secretary Rogers, who didn't know that the meeting was going on. It was interesting, because the next day, I went and went on a little sort of private trip to the shopping district of Beijing, and I saw everybody, huge crowds of people, all clustered around the display cases where they were showing the "People's Daily." That's the way people got their news, and that's the way people in China were informed as to what they were supposed to think. There was Nixon and Mao, shaking hands. It was an electric moment and everybody was very quiet, but they were taking it all in.

Of course, I may be jumping the gun here, but you know, this trip was very, very carefully planned by the White House and the Chinese to have maximum public impact on the American people. The rhythm of each day was that you had a telegenic event in the morning, you had a telegenic event in the evening, and you did all the work and the talking and so on and so forth in the middle of the day.

So the American people got Nixon on the Great Wall or the opening banquet or other things at prime time, either breakfast or evening. The impact of that week, I think, was to change the American attitude towards the opening to China.

Winston Lord: Could I just interrupt . . .

KT McFarland: Sure, absolutely.

Winston Lord: . . . because I want Jon to weigh in here, too. But I want to double back quickly to the public October 1971 trip, after the secret trip, setting up . . .

KT McFarland: So there was a secret trip in July . . .

Winston Lord: . . . which Ron Walker was very crucial and involved in all the logistics, security, press coverage, and the importance of press coverage for the reasons you just mentioned. But we did two other things. The Chinese, very subtly, were accustoming their own people to this dramatic breakthrough. So we started out in small meetings, then we went to some cultural event where the cadres were there, getting exposed to Kissinger and the others. Then we went to the Summer Palace and toured where ordinary Chinese tourists there.

So they were gradually, day after day in October, accustoming the Chinese audience to what was coming. Meanwhile, secretly, we were negotiating the Shanghai Communiqué. To make a long story short, we finished most of that except for a slight exception of the Taiwan issue, a minor problem, but almost everything else we worked out then. I have to just take a minute on that, because it shows you how smart Zhou Enlai was, or Mao.

We, in October, gave them a draft of a possible communiqué, looking toward February, 1972. It was the typical draft "Kumbaya," sort of, we're friends getting together and progress. There was some realism, we weren't totally stupid. But it was a fairly ordinary diplomatic draft.

We give it to Zhou Enlai, he comes back the next day and almost literally throws it on the floor in contempt. He had obviously checked with Mao. He said, look, this is ridiculous.

Richard Solomon: It was dishonest.

Winston Lord: It's dishonest. We fought each other in Korea, we hate each other, and suddenly we love each other? Come on. This is going to make our allies suspicious, it's going to upset our domestic audiences. Let's have a new kind of communiqué.

Let's agree to have differences stated on each side, both in philosophy and ideology and on specific issues. Then when we can agree, those agreements will stand out as being more credible and the exceptions.

On the one hand, it was good news, bad news. We realized the brilliance of this idea. But the bad news is we had about 36 hours before we were leaving. So, semi-panicked, semi-exhilarated, Kissinger asked me to do a redraft of our portions. We couldn't do the Chinese positions, but our positions and where we might agree. I stayed up till three and then I was supposed to wake him up, I handed it, and he redrafted it.

Then the Chinese came back and basically we got the communiqué done in that October trip as well as the very important public stuff that Ron Walker and other White House staff did, to set up the public and logistic aspects of the trip.

KT McFarland: So by the time the President had gone, the Shanghai Communiqué had been agreed to . . .

Winston Lord: Except for Taiwan, which is a major problem still to be negotiated between Kissinger and Zhou Enlai during the President's trip.

KT McFarland: Jon, why don't you talk about during the President's trip, you were there, you were as a military officer. What negotiations were you having? What was the military...

Jonathan Howe: Well, really, it was just more of the same in the sense of briefing about the threats that they had from Russia, primarily.

KT McFarland: So sharing American intelligence with the Chinese.

Jonathan Howe: Yeah. So we did some of that, got to go on the Great Wall, etc., etc. Which speaks, again, to these pictures that appeared in "LIFE Magazine," which was big then, and so forth, and the sort of communication of all those events that occurred. But like everybody else, I was sweating out the Taiwan issue and getting that right. This was a real crisis for those of us in the staff, trying to figure out...

KT McFarland: Tell us a bit about the whole China . . . What was the situation with China? It was a naval issue, China had . . . Talk about, sort of, what was the significance of Taiwan, we've had a relationship with Taiwan, then we didn't?

Jonathan Howe: But we'd had a number of crises . . .

KT McFarland: We had a treaty with Taiwan.

Jonathan Howe: Yeah, remember, they had the seat in the U.N., which the PRC would take, etc.

Winston Lord: They took it, as we were leaving the October trip, as we flew out, we got news of the U.N. vote, which was not the greatest ending to our trip. Go ahead.

Jonathan Howe: Yeah. No, no, exactly. But Taiwan has always been a major issue for the U.S. Navy. There have been a series of Taiwan crises, near war in Quemoy and Matsu in 1958. So, particularly for navy people and the 7th Fleet, which I was associated with quite a bit, we always had the war plan, etc., etc. So there were, how was Taiwan going to work out, and the Chinese wanted us to remove our forces in Taiwan, and the President was willing to do that if he had a Vietnam agreement. Said they're there to support our Vietnam problem.

Winston Lord: Giving the incentive for the Chinese to lean on the Vietnamese.

Jonathan Howe: Right. Then of course, as you know, and Winston and others should talk about this, but it finally came with the formulation that everybody seemed to like, including people in Taiwan and China. Chinese on both sides of the straits.

KT McFarland: So one China, two Chinas?

Jonathan Howe: One China, yeah, exactly. Recognized that there is but one China.

KT McFarland: And each one thinks it's them.

Jonathan Howe: Yeah. So this was a big change. We have a defense treaty with Taiwan.

KT McFarland: With Taiwan.

Jonathan Howe: It is still totally resolved yet, but China is Taiwan's biggest trading partner, etc. There's a lot going on, of intercommunication today between those two countries.

Nicholas Platt: During that week, there were three sets of talks that were going on. One was Nixon and Zhou discussing the world, and one was Kissinger and Qiao Guanhua discussing the actual wording of the Shanghai Communiqué, and one was Rogers and his counterpart, the Chinese foreign minister, Ji Pengfei, and that was all about what, we called the nuts and bolts of the relationship. Trade, travel, immigration, legal issues, education, etc., etc., which later on became very . . .

KT McFarland: Which was all new, because we had had none of those agreements with the Chinese for generations.

Nicholas Platt: We had none of those agreements, and we didn't know anything. We had talked a little bit, but, in fact, I remember doing one of those talks, there was the Chinese were saying you're still requiring us to be fingerprinted when we go to the United States, if we go to the United States. We said no, that's finished. And they said no, it's not finished. So Rogers says you go find out. So I rush out and there's a White House telephone in the Great Hall of the People, behind the pillar, very discreet.

I call up and it's a wonderful connection, White House switch, and then they get me the State Department Operations Center. Okay, and operations center comes on. It's 3 a.m. in the morning. I say, wake up whoever is

responsible and find me the answer to this question, which they did. Then I went back in, and Rogers said to the Chinese, well, we do no longer require that you be fingerprinted, but isn't it good that we have good communications now.

So in any case, the nuts and bolts were being discussed. It was a very popular forum, because all the people who couldn't get into a meeting and wanted to take part came and took part.

KT McFarland: Had something to do.

Winston Lord: Dick ought to talk briefly about the Taiwan issue, and I'll comment as well, because that obviously was the crucial thing we have to get over.

Man in audience: You all had one hell of a time getting that phone in, I'll tell you.

Nicholas Platt: But it worked beautifully.

Jonathan Howe: It wasn't bugged.

KT McFarland: Oh, yeah. Dick?

Richard Solomon: Well, what is really significant was that on the secret trip, my understanding, you were there, that Kissinger laid out our position on Taiwan, and Zhou said fine, now we can talk about the rest of the world, and it was sort of brushed aside. Then during the Mao meeting, and then subsequently reiterated by Chairman Mao, his position is, we don't need to resolve the Taiwan issue right now. We can resolve it after 100 years. We may have to fight at that point, but we've got many more important issues to deal with in the short run. So the Taiwan issue, in effect, was put on the back burner.

We can get off onto the follow-through, but the reality was that the cooperation was on these broader strategic issues, and there was, what should we say, a kind of a gradual letdown on the Taiwan situation with the de-recognition then occurring during the Carter administration.

What should we say, we still of course maintain a relationship with Taiwan, we have our internal law, the Taiwan Relations Act, which says we will help them defend themselves. So I would say the payout was favorable in terms of the larger strategic environment being the focus, and the way that the

Taiwan issue played out was not the sharp abandonment of the long-term ally.

Winston Lord: I would go beyond that. Here's the genius and the courage of both leaders. Taiwan had said for 20 years, we won't even talk to you about anything except Taiwan. Now that we had moved in the secret channel so we got a bigger agenda, we went there and we had this bigger agenda. We may want to show the Nixon Zhou Enlai picture. But the Chinese were willing, as long as they got certain principles . . . like all Chinese on both sides of the strait, they believe there's one China . . . They were willing to put off other awkward elements, and we were refusing to give them up. Namely our diplomatic relations with Taiwan, our security treaty with Taiwan, and the fact that there are troops in Taiwan.

People say that Kissinger and Nixon made these great concessions on Taiwan. Look at what the Chinese did. They went from saying, you can't talk about anything else to tolerating an opening with the President of the United States while we were selling arms and had troops in Taiwan.

So I think both sides were intent, as you say, to move ahead on the broader issues like in the Shanghai Communiqué, a reference to anti-hegemony, which is of course the Soviets. In fact, we did not give up diplomatic relations or the treaty until President Carter normalized in 1979.

Imagine this. When Kissinger gave a press conference on February 28, explaining the Shanghai Communiqué, he, in the course of that, reiterated our defense commitment to Taiwan. We couldn't put it in the Communiqué, but we told Zhou Enlai the night before we were going to do that. So he managed, on Chinese soil, to reaffirm that. I'm just making the point that the Chinese, as well as the Americans, showed great wisdom and courage on this issue.

KT McFarland: Dick?

Richard Solomon: Well, just the threat that this initiative elicited for a number of countries and governments, Taiwan being one, shouldn't be underestimated. These are just things that were not much on the radar screen, but the PRC, Beijing sent a delegation to New York when they entered the U.N.

One of their cooks was poisoned, and we assumed that this was an intelligence operation. In Hong Kong, there was a publication of the Shanghai Communiqué, but lo and behold, one of the key paragraphs dealing with Taiwan was not included in this publication.

So there were games being played on both sides that reflect the sensitivity and indeed the threat of this initiative. As Win was saying, it reflected the determination and courage of the two senior leaders to follow through on this, that despite a lot of the unhappiness or worse that was going on, on the sidelines, that the initiative was followed through on.

KT McFarland: Talk to me about Japan, because the United States had been a close ally of Japan, treaty with Japan, and yet Japan knew nothing about either the secret trip . . .

Winston Lord: Well, Japan of course was very upset, shocked, and they went ahead immediately, they had been holding up to normalize their own relations. But it was interesting, our discussions with the Chinese. When we first went there, Kissinger would tell Zhou Enlai about the value of the U.S.-Japan alliance restraining Japanese militarism.

If they were worried about Japan reviving World War II themes, their best bet is let Japan relax under our security umbrella. In the initial talks, the first couple of trips, Zhou Enlai rejected this and said no, no, you're just making Japan fat and happy and you ought to get rid of this alliance.

Shows you that discussions can really change people's minds. Over time, Zhou Enlai, in effect, admitted that Kissinger was right, that this is, it's actually good for China, at least for the time being, to have Japan not remilitarized because of our security umbrella.

In fact Mao, in one of the subsequent meetings, and we had five of them that I was in, scolded Nixon and Kissinger for hurting relations with Japan, and he told Kissinger, "You come here all the time, why don't you go to Tokyo?" And so it was an interesting change in their outlook.

KT McFarland: Evolution.

Winston Lord: One last point on Taiwan, thanks to eight successive presidents of both parties, there's been bipartisanship on this. I think we've managed the China-Taiwan equation extremely well. There have been tensions, ups and downs. We've gone ahead with this. Comprehensive, major, positive, negative, sweet and sour relations with Beijing, but at the same time, Taiwan, primarily because of their own people, and their entrepreneurship and courage and good leadership, has first become an economic heavyweight, then a democracy, showing the Chinese like freedom as well.

They've had security with our umbrella. We've done this balancing act and Taiwan has prospered, and we've got this relationship with China. It's a major success story.

KT McFarland: Let me go to the big sweep of history. Some people have said look, this was inevitable. It was going to happen anyway, it wasn't because of the James Bond Kissinger secret trip, it wasn't because of Nixon's strategic vision. This was just inevitable, it was going to happen. What do you guys think? And I'll start with you, Jon. I'm going to ask you all the same question. Was it going to happen anyway?

Jonathan Howe: No, I don't think so. I think that these individuals, we owe a lot of thanks and respect for their wisdom in pursuing it. I think that presidents differ, one and the other. Nixon had this rich background or understanding of foreign policy. As Winston said, he worked, he studied it, and he had his own thoughts. Frankly, even the Kissinger-Nixon relationship was interesting to watch, because they needed each other. Kissinger was brilliant and a great thinker, etc., but Nixon had a lot to add, hard questions, and the two working together, it was a great partnership.

As far as the Chinese are concerned, I think we were lucky. Mao was sick already and didn't have much time left. Zhou Enlai, I think, was a critical person. We always learn in foreign policy about the handshake, that Dulles wouldn't shake his hand at a conference. So we all shook hands with him. And I remember, Winston, when we were together, it was just Kissinger, Zhou Enlai, you and me and Nancy Tang, as I recall, as an interpreter, for just a little dinner.

But there was a wisdom there. A kind of long view, and Mao himself was smart. So I think we were very lucky. Then of course just circumstances of the Russian pressure and other things that made this a possibility. But it wouldn't happen in all situations, for sure.

KT McFarland: Mr. Diplomat?

Nicholas Platt: There's nothing inevitable about history. Ultimately this would have happened, but you had to have the combination of political will and diplomatic skill. Nixon and Mao had the political will and they were powerful people in their own communities and in their own body politics, and Zhou Enlai and Kissinger had the tactical, political, diplomatic skill to make it happen. Those kinds of constellations don't come into alignment all that often, and we were lucky that that's what it was.

KT McFarland: Dick? Four great men changed history?

Richard Solomon: Leaders do really make a significant difference. This is totally speculative but, let's say, Hubert Humphrey had won the 1968 election. Now, I had the very interesting experience of leading a congressional delegation a couple years later that the co-head was Hubert Humphrey. So I spent two weeks getting to know the man. I didn't know him before then.

My instinct is, there wasn't the strategic vision, the broad vision, and the kind of experience that Richard Nixon brought to his presidency. Remember, he had been Eisenhower's vice president. He had travelled all around the world, he knew these leaders. Then, of course, he lost the 1960 election but continued to travel around the world during the '60s when he formulated this approach with all this personal experience.

Hubert Humphrey's experience was much more in domestic politics. How would he have handled a situation where again, the great fear was that the United States would be drawn back into a conflict with China because of the Vietnam War? You can say that he would not have had the broader Soviet element and strategic context that Nixon brought to the initiative. Now, that's totally speculative, but leaders do make a difference.

KT McFarland: Only Nixon can go to China?

Winston Lord: Well, I agree with my colleagues about this was not inevitable, certainly not in the near term, and leaders count. The only point I would make also, Nixon's right flank was protected, because he was a known anti-Communist. So his party people, some of whom might have suspected or not liked what he was doing, had to be loyal, although there were still some holdouts who were very angry, no matter whether he was their president or not. The Democrats were more apt to be sympathetic in some respects.

So the old cliché has truth to it, namely that Nixon could go to China. It would be a lot more difficult for a Democrat because, if Humphrey had tried to do this, he would have been hammered by the Republicans, whereas Nixon could quiet things down. I remember flying back after the Nixon trip on Air Force One, and Nixon and Kissinger and those who were not so enthusiastic, like Pat Buchanan and so on, all wondered about what the reaction was going to be in the United States.

We were not aware of these dramatic pictures of the PLA playing "Turkey in the Straw" and Nixon and Zhou Enlai toasting each other and everything, and the Great Wall. We didn't realize how popular it was. Of course there

were some who were upset, the Goldwaters and so on. It just shows you that even then, after the trip, and we're flying back, they were concerned about the impact, so it showed you the political courage that it took. So I would just underline what my colleagues said.

Richard Solomon: Let me add just one brief thing. When Mao and Nixon had their discussion, Mao said to Nixon, "I like to deal with rightists, because they follow through on what they promise." Now, that was only some flattery or however you might want to put it, but at least . . .

KT McFarland: It's great.

Winston Lord: No, no, I think he was sincere, particularly balancing the Soviet Union was important.

KT McFarland: I think we have just a few minutes left for final thoughts. Jon, I'm going to start with you and swing by. Final thoughts, not only the opening to China, but the significance of it.

Jonathan Howe: Well, I think it was huge, in history, certainly in our relationship and building for what we have now in terms of China as a very different country. So I think that this was a very important, a very tricky, and as I mentioned before, an amazing year in which it wasn't just this, it was the work with the Russians as well, and Vietnam was still going on. Winston can talk more about those excruciating efforts that were made to try to get them to sign up and make a treaty.

I can remember, we were bombing with B-52s on Christmas Day of '72. But soon afterwards, we had an agreement, and you can say well, what happened then, where we went.

But in any case, this was a very important juncture in our foreign policy, I think, in developing it and maturing our approach to the world.

KT McFarland: Nick?

Nicholas Platt: I think the Nixon trip was a cataclysmic diplomatic event. But what it led to was an extraordinary meeting between the Chinese and the American people. I was in the liaison office when we set up at 14 months later, and that began the meeting of Chinese and Americans, traders, bankers, students. We watched all these delegations come and we put them together. The same thing was going on in Washington. It was all the nuts and bolts, really.

We'd laid the groundwork during the Nixon trip and the breakthrough had occurred. But now these two peoples were beginning to figure out how to work with each other. Those relationships have become so huge that they really actually run the relationship. In 1989, the Soviet Union collapsed and Tiananmen occurred, and so on and so forth, but the relationship went on because of these ties.

KT McFarland: Dick?

Richard Solomon: Well, I think it's worth just reiterating the Nixon-Mao initiative really was, probably, one of the most transformative diplomatic initiatives, certainly in the 20th century. It really transformed the dynamic of international politics and great power relations.

One way of looking at it from today's point of view, you had a generation of leaders on both sides that were very worldly, in the sense that they had been involved in the middle of the Cold War, the Vietnam context, and that generation now is gone. One of the things, looking at the world today, 2014, is we don't seem to have the experiential leaders who have that sense of international affairs. That may be unfair to leaders today, but one has to be impressed by the vision, the experience, and ultimately the initiative that was taken by President Nixon. We can get off into Mao's motivation, which was complex also. But it was a world-changing initiative.

KT McFarland: Winston, final word is yours.

Winston Lord: In addition to the U.S.-China relationship, it shook up the whole international landscape in ways we don't have time to go into now. It was, as many of us have said, and we all agree, it was genuinely transformative. The last point I'll make is on the evolution of U.S.-China relations. As we meet today, there's just been the latest summit between American and Chinese leaders in Beijing. If you look at decade by decade, you could see how this relationship has evolved.

In the '70s, it was mostly balancing the polar bear, the Soviet Union, and conceptual structural discussions, but of course we didn't have normalized relations so there's not real content. Nick in the State Department laid some essential groundwork, but there really wasn't much there because we didn't have diplomatic relations. Seventy-nine, we had diplomatic relations. So the '80s were spent trying to flesh out this relationship, in addition to the continuing anti-Soviet dimension, to have other aspects, which were crucial. Because as you said, in '89 and '90, two things happened. Tiananmen Square, which elevated human rights in our relationship with China and complicated it. And the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the

Soviet empire and the Soviet threat, therefore you didn't have that glue for our relationship.

So we spent the '90s sorting out these problems and establishing a new relationship. Then with 2000 and since, the issue has been China's growing economic, military, and diplomatic power, and how we relate, not a rising power, because I consider China a returning power, they were number one for about 4,000 years.

How you relate them to the established power and not repeat the historical examples of 11 out of 15 of these phenomena have ended in conflict. So we have now the most important relationship in the world and the most complex relationship in the world. I would end on a famous headline that you started with, and it happens to be true, this was the week that changed the world.

KT McFarland: I think this is a profound example of the people who really did work for the men who changed the world and were the giants of American history. The significant impact that you've had individually, collectively, on not just the United States but on the world, is something that we should all applaud. It was so significant that I think we're going to ask them back to do another panel, to talk about the relationship of the United States after the Nixon presidency. Because although Nixon left office in 1974, he continued to travel to China, he continued personally to write about it, think about it, and expand the relationship. For now, I want to thank Admiral Jon Howe, Ambassador Nicholas Platt, Ambassador Richard Solomon, and Ambassador Winston Lord. And thank you all for coming.