

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Prime Minister Chou En-lai, People's  
Republic of China  
Chi P'eng-fei, Acting PRC Foreign  
Minister  
Chang Wen-chin, Director, Western Europe  
and American Department, PRC Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs  
Hsuing Hsiang-hui, Secretary to the Prime  
Minister  
T'ang Wen-shen and Chi Chao-chu, Chinese  
Interpreters  
Chinese Notetakers

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the  
President for National Security Affairs  
Winston Lord, Senior Staff Member, NSC

PLACE: Government Guest House

DATE & TIME: October 26, 1971; 7:00-8:10 a.m.

GENERAL SUBJECTS: Prisoners, Announcements of Trip, Technical  
Matters

Dr. Kissinger: Good morning Mr. Prime Minister. It was most courteous of you to meet with us this morning before our departure. It has been a most pleasant stay, and we all regret having to leave.

Before we go, can I raise some of the practical problems that remain?

PM Chou: Yes.

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By KMP NARA, Date 8/13/07

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Dr. Kissinger: We have to change the date of the announcement we can release tomorrow; we have to say from October 20 to October "26", rather than October "25."

PM Chou: That's right.

Dr. Kissinger: So we will do this and have to make sure you do this too.

PM Chou: Your visit was from the 20th to the 26th.

Dr. Kissinger: To the 26th. Otherwise everything stays the same.

PM Chou: The time of the announcement will still be the same?

Dr. Kissinger: The 27th at 4:00 Washington time in the afternoon. Again, just to confirm, you will announce today that I have left?

PM Chou: This evening, but only a simple release, saying that you viewed some places of interest, not saying where you went. You can disclose that after you go back to the United States, cite those places that you visited.

Dr. Kissinger: No, it's better not to. If you don't mind, I can do it, or you could do it, after your announcement. You see, when I arrive in Washington tonight our time, I will be greeted by a lot of newsmen, and I will say I must report to the President, and I will say nothing until we release the announcement. Then I will give a background briefing at 4:00 tomorrow afternoon our time when we make the announcement, and on that occasion I might mention the places we have visited.

PM Chou: So for us, we will just release tonight something saying you have left China after engaging in some talks and viewing some places of interest, without citing specific places. Maybe we will cite those of our people who will see you off at the airport, the Vice Chairman, the Acting Foreign Minister.

Dr. Kissinger: Certainly, that is fine.

PM Chou: And we will be sending our Acting Chief of Protocol, Mr. Han Hsu, to accompany you to Shanghai together with our navigator and interpreter so as to help at the refueling in Shanghai.

Dr. Kissinger: You are very courteous.

When I am asked tomorrow what we discussed, what does the Prime Minister recommend that I say?

PM Chou: It is better for you to decide that. Think it over yourself on what you think you should say. We had talks, that is certain.

Dr. Kissinger: I will say that we discussed technical arrangements, and we began discussing in a general way the agenda.

PM Chou: All right.

Dr. Kissinger: And I will send you the briefing through the regular channel as soon as I can get it to Paris.

PM Chou: And then we can coordinate with you on that.

Dr. Kissinger: Right. My understanding is that we will propose to you a date for the announcement of the President's visit, and that it will be around November 22. If the correspondents ask me when will the visit be announced, I will say in a few weeks.

PM Chou: Good.

Dr. Kissinger: But I will make a proposal to you within a week or ten days about our proposed date for the announcement which will be around November 22.

PM Chou: That's more or less alright. Anyway, no later than the 24th.

Dr. Kissinger: Between the 20th and the 24th. But I have to check our schedules when I get back, and if it makes no difference to you, I will let you know.

PM Chou: If we find something as a reason why the dates are not convenient for us we will tell you about it.

Dr. Kissinger: It is not a big problem. My understanding is that you have agreed to some of the technical people, headed by General Haig, to come after that announcement, after December 1.

PM Chou: That is so. How do you spell General Haig's name?

Dr. Kissinger: Like the general who was so bad in World War I, H-A-I-G. But he's very good, and he has my complete confidence. He's less complicated than I, but he knows everything on our work.

PM Chou: And he will bring some technical people with him?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, and he will keep them under strict control. He's a firmer personality than I.

I wanted to raise one other question with the Prime Minister if I could, which I also did last time, which concerns the American prisoners in China.

PM Chou: Do you mean the two special agents?

Dr. Kissinger: Those two and then the two pilots. But they are two separate cases.

When I was here last time, Mr. Prime Minister, I knew only that you held these prisoners, but I did not know the facts, because I could not inquire for obvious reasons. I have now inquired, and I find that Fecteau and Downey did engage in activities that would be considered illegal by any country.

PM Chou: That's right.

Dr. Kissinger: Therefore, our plea to you has nothing to do with the justice of the case. In fact, we concede that you have a correct legal case. But if, as an act of clemency, you could consider that they have been punished sufficiently, it would make a very good impression in the United States.

PM Chou: According to our legal procedures, if a criminal in our prisons behaves himself well, that is if he confesses to his crime, then we can lessen the sentence.

Dr. Kissinger: I don't know whether they have confessed.

PM Chou: They have all confessed. And it is possible in about two months time we may consider lessening the sentences of some of them who have behaved themselves well. As for who that will be we will tell you later. In the early part of this year we already released an old man, Walsh.

Dr. Kissinger: I am aware of that. We would do our best to see to it that anyone you release would not engage in any propaganda against the People's Republic when he returns.

PM Chou: Well, Walsh didn't behave badly.

Dr. Kissinger: No, Walsh did not behave badly.

The two pilots, to the best of my knowledge, are victims of the war. They made an honest mistake in flying over Chinese territory, unless I am totally misinformed.

PM Chou: It is indeed true, they did fly into our air space. Otherwise, we could not have shot them down.

Dr. Kissinger: No, but to the best of my knowledge, it was unintentional and therefore is a different case from Fecteau and Downey.

PM Chou: But we have to deal with them in a different light, because the war in Vietnam has not yet ended, and if we released them before it ended, it might give some bad impressions.

So it might be possible that we could release the spies earlier, although their crimes were heavier. They have been in prison a long time. One has almost served out his sentence. Maybe first we will solve the question of one of the two.

Dr. Kissinger: It would mean a great deal to the American people. And we would treat it as an act of clemency, and not as something we have a right to request, and any public explanation we would make would be in that framework.

The only other thing. . . I have only two other things, Mr. Prime Minister. First, I wanted to thank everybody who has made this visit so memorable and so useful.

PM Chou: That's what they should do, and such work will still be done in the future.

Dr. Kissinger: Not only you, but all of your associates, interpreters, drivers, everybody behaved with extraordinary courtesy and efficiency. All of my doubting colleagues who questioned me before we came now know that they are dealing with men of principle. (Chou nods)

Now, I have only one other personal thing to say to you, Mr. Prime Minister. A friend of mine, who is a collector of Chinese art, before I left sent me something which he wanted me, as a token of the pleasure Chinese art has given him, to bring back something from America to China. It is something in the form of a lotus flower, which he tells me means peace and serenity in traditional China. And so I have taken the liberty of bringing this with me. It is a totally unofficial gift which indicates the feeling of the American people for what China has meant to so many of them. It is not worth a great deal, but it is a symbol of the attitude with which all of us will come on our jounies next year to improve relations between our peoples and to move from hostility to friendship.

PM Chou: You friend's name? You?

Dr. Kissinger: No. I can tell you his name. It's Governor Rockefeller of New York, But he did not particularly want it to be from him personally.

PM Chou: Please convey our thanks to Mr. Rockefeller. It's not possible for us to give him a return gift this time, but when General Haig comes we will ask him to take back a return gift, and since Governor Rockefeller likes Chinese art, we will select a piece of Chinese art and ask General Haig to take it back to him.

Dr. Kissinger: He didn't want me to mention his name.

PM Chou: But it is good that you did, because we know he is a friend who wants to be a friend of China.

We will have to dispense with the general meeting?

When will the plane be taking off?

Dr. Kissinger: We have set it for 10:00, but we had better make it 10:30.

There were then some closing pleasantries.