

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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February 24, 1973 ✓

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*
SUBJECT: My Meeting with Chairman Mao

Attached is the full transcript of my meeting with Chairman Mao. Following are the highlights, much of which I have already given you.

Atmosphere

The Chairman seemed in better health than last year. Indeed he said that this allowed him to speak longer than he was able to with you, so as to convey more fully his views to you through me. He apologized that he was not able to meet Mrs. Nixon and Secretary Rogers during your visit. He spoke deliberately and in a gravelly voice, but with great animation, coherence, and allusive skill. His displayed a quick and earthy sense of humor. Clearly he is still mentally alert, despite one or two moments when he seemed distracted. There is no way of knowing whether he has "good" and "bad" days mentally or whether his performance is steady.

Physically, as you will recall, he is impressive. One thinks of him as being large rather than fat. He radiates authority and deep wisdom, and Chou - as in your meeting - was deferential. There is no question who is boss. He was helped up by his young female attendant when he greeted me, but got up unaided at the end of our conversation and escorted me to the outer room in a slow shuffle, his attendant hovering near but not touching him.

Despite these generally positive signs, the Chairman said as we were moving toward our chairs "I don't look bad, but God has sent me an invitation." He repeated this as we concluded our talk, in case I had missed his first reference.

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By *KWS* NARA, Date 4-26-02

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As you will see from the transcript, the Chairman placed our conversation in the framework of his talk with you and considered his remarks as elaboration of what he told you. On several occasions he referred specifically to points you had made. At the end he extended his warm greetings to you, as well as Mrs. Nixon, and he carefully included this gesture in their draft of the communique on my meeting. Chou pointed out the next day that this had happened - by coincidence he claimed - on Brezhnev's seventieth birthday!

In short, I was even more impressed by the grandeur of the Chairman this time than last. One can easily imagine the power and intelligence of this man in his prime.

Substance

Mao touched on many of the themes of your conversation and almost every topic that Chou and I discussed. His basic message can be summed up as follows:

-- The present Chinese leadership will soon leave the scene. He said that God had sent him an "invitation" and that he was the oldest person at the meeting. Chou commented that he was the second oldest.

-- The principal obstacle to better US-PRC relations is out of the way. Not only Truman (China policy) but also Johnson (Vietnam policy) had been buried. He said that we had done "good work" in ending the Vietnam War; he had me confirm that the basic issues were settled; and he agreed with my observation that we needed now a transitional period of tranquility.

-- The Soviet threat is real and growing. He cited many historical instances of Russian land-grabbing. The present "goal of the Soviet Union is to occupy both Europe and Asia, the two continents."

-- Thus the US and PRC must cooperate. "So long as the objectives are the same, we would not harm you nor would you harm us. And we can work together to commonly deal with a bastard."

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-- In view of all the above factors, the US and PRC must institutionalize its relationship. Chou noted that Mao had explicitly approved the liaison offices. Mao brought up the need for more trade between our two countries, terming the present level "pitiful." He urged exchanges: to learn more about America and its policies, increase the number of English speaking Chinese, and let more foreigners into China.

-- The PRC looks to the US to play a strong world role to counter Soviet designs. He proposed an axis of US, Japan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Europe. We should pay more attention to Europe and Japan, maintain strong European defenses, concentrate our forces in Asia (they are too "scattered"), and make sure that trade barriers or other minor bickering do not block fundamental cooperation with our allies.

Other interesting sub-themes or tidbits from this conversation include the following:

-- Madame Mao, representing the left, is apparently challenging him. Repeatedly during our talk he referred jokingly to the trouble women cause China and his plan to export ten million to the United States to cause disasters for us.

-- We might be contributing to the threat to China, whether or not inadvertently. We and Europe were fostering fake detente and might think that "it would be a fine thing if it were that the ill waters would flow toward China." We might want to see the USSR get bogged down in China and once they were worn out we could "poke [our] finger at the Soviet back."

-- The PRC only goes through the motions of ideology. Thus the US and PRC would have to criticize one another sometimes. But he likes us, not our communist party, just as he like Pompidou, not the French communist party (in both parties Moscow influence is heavy).

-- The Chinese must modernize themselves. He criticized his countrymen's conservatism, whether overseas or at home. He stressed

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the need to streamline the Chinese language and learn English. He placed his hopes on the young of China and dismissed those over 30.

In response I emphasized the main lines I was using with Chou:

-- We are prepared to accelerate our relations in all fields.

-- We would never gang up on China nor encourage a Soviet attack. We want to prevent PRC-USSR conflict not defeat it or take advantage of it.

-- We have no illusions about Soviet designs, but our policy is less direct and involves doing business with Moscow.

-- We will strengthen our ties with Europe and Japan, keep strong defenses, and increase our influence along the axis the Chairman described.

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