

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

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18 November 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD:

On the morning of 18 November I proceeded by the usual circuitous route to the vicinity of the Chinese Embassy Residence in Neuilly and walked the rest of the way after parking the car some distance away.

I was met at the gate by WEI, at the door by TSAO and ushered into the "Red Room". The Ambassador came in and greeted me warmly. He said that he had returned a week ahead of schedule to bring me some of the answers which we had requested. I said I was sorry he had had to return early from his homeland. He said that what we were doing was important and he did not mind. He said he had had a good trip but 24 hours in a plane was long. He had returned via Rangoon, Karachi and Cairo.

Ambassador HUANG then said that while he was home he had had echoes of Dr. Kissinger's most recent trip and everyone was pleased.

The Ambassador then directed TSAO to read the following to me in English:

"The Chinese side has received the U.S. messages of October 30 and October 31 and hereby makes the following replies:

1. The Chinese side proposes that the announcement already agreed upon by the two sides on the date of President Nixon's visit be made at 0500, November 30, Tuesday, Peking time. That is, 1600, November 29, Monday, Washington time.
2. The Chinese Government welcomes and invites Mrs. Nixon to accompany the President on his visit to China.
3. The Chinese Government will make arrangements for a 7-day visit and overnight stay in Hangchow for President Nixon and his party. "

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
Date: 6-30-06

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I thanked them and said that this partially answered some of the contents of the message I had for them.

I then delivered the message covering the postponement of the Vietnamese meeting and consequent postponement of Dr. Kissinger's trip to Paris. The Ambassador noted that some of the questions had already been answered by his message. He asked when would Dr. Kissinger come to Paris. I said that I did not know but that this would depend on the North Vietnamese.

He then said that he would tell me the real reason why the Chinese would prefer to move the date of the announcement of President Nixon's visit to the 29th instead of the 23rd. At that time they would have a Chief of Government of a neighboring state visiting them and they did not feel it would be opportune to make such an announcement during his stay in China. I said that if I were a guessing man I could guess what country was involved. The Ambassador asked which one I would guess and I said, "North Vietnam". He slapped me on the back and said, "You guessed right the first time. He will leave China on the 26th; therefore, the announcement on the 29th suits us best."

Ambassador HUANG said he was pleased the President would travel in a Chinese plane and said the Prime Minister had told Dr. Kissinger that he (P.M. CHOU EN-LAI) would accompany the President and thus security was guaranteed. He then asked if the President often flew in non-American planes. I said that to the best of my knowledge, he had not, nor had any of his predecessors. I had made every single foreign trip with President Eisenhower and two trips with President Truman and as far as I knew, none of them had ever travelled in a foreign plane. He looked as pleased as a Cheshire cat.

The Ambassador said I was an old friend and he had not seen me in a long time and had set aside the morning for me. I was then served large quantities of Chinese food some of which looked like chopped unmentionables wrapped in the gall bladders of sheep, but maybe that was my imagination. I was also served 'Peking lightening', a beverage called MAI.TAI that could easily replace lighter fluid.

When I would not take more than a small amount alleging that I had to drive my car, he commented that Russians drink a lot. I then said that there was a story going around about Khrushchev's visit to President Eisenhower. Reportedly Eisenhower asked Khrushchev what he thought about the U.S. Khrushchev said it was okay but there were lots of drunkards. Eisenhower was indignant, opened his desk, took out a pistol, and gave it to Khrushchev saying, "You have my permission to shoot any drunkards you see." Next day in New York Khrushchev went for a walk, saw a drunkard and shot him; later he shot another - in all, four. Next morning the New York Newspapers came out with huge headlines, "Four Soviet Diplomats Mysteriously Shot". The Ambassador laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks and WEI and TSAO were equally transported.

The Ambassador then asked if I was going to China with the President, not as interpreter but as member of his staff, or was I going on the next trip. I said I would like to go but really did not know. He then replied that he had told them in Peking about me and how I had helped open the door that had been closed for 25 years and he would talk to Dr. Kissinger when he saw him about it. First, he would soften him up with a Chinese lunch as he understood Dr. Kissinger was a great lover of Chinese food. (I'm sorry, but he did say all this). During this time I was eating fried shrimp in soy bean sauce in the service of my country. I have only eaten shrimp one other time, also with the Ambassador and in the same Red Room!

All of the foregoing was washed down with jasmine tea and accompanied by the now usual friendly pats on the arm and back. I then took my leave in accord with the usual ceremonial. They said that as soon as they had anything for me they would be in touch.

Left the Ambassador in the Red Room, TSAO at the door and WEI at the garden gate. It was perhaps the most cordial and relaxed interview I had with the Ambassador.



VERNON A. WALTERS
Major General, USA
Defense Attache