HE, I RESIDENCY

7:30 on the evening of July 15, 1971, I spoke to the nation from a television studio in Burbank, California. I talked for only three and a half minutes, but my words produced one of the greatest diplomatic surprises of the century.

I began, "I have requested this television time tonight to announce a major development in our efforts to build a lasting peace in the world." Then I read an announcement that was being made at that very moment in Peking:

Premier Chou En-lai and Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs, held talks in Peking from July 9 to 11, 1971. Knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the People's Republic of China, Premier Chou En-lai, on behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of China, has extended an invitation to President Nixon to visit China at an appropriate date before May 1972. President Nixon has accepted the invitation with pleasure.

The meeting between the leaders of China and the United States is to seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides.

Behind this brief announcement lay more than two years of complex, subtle, and determined diplomatic signals and negotiations. Despite the almost miraculous secrecy we had been able to maintain, the China initiative was actually one of the most publicly prepared surprises in history.

The first time I raised the idea of the importance of relations between the United States and Communist China was in my article in Foreign Affairs in 1967. In my inaugural address I had referred indirectly to it when I said, "We seek an open world...a world in which no people, great or small, will live in angry isolation." Less than two weeks later, on February 1, I wrote a memorandum to Kissinger urging that we give every encouragement to the attitude that the administration was exploring possibilities of rapprochement with the Chinese. "This, of course, should be done privately and should under no circumstances get into the public prints from this direction," I added. During 1969 the Chinese ignored the few low-level signals of interest we sent them, and it was not until 1970 that we began a serious approach to opening a dialogue to see where, if anywhere, it might lead.

The first serious public step in the China initiative had been taken in February 1970 when I sent the first Foreign Policy Report to Congress. The section on China began:

The Chinese are a great and vital people who should not remain isolated from the international community.

The principles underlying our relations with Communist China are similar to those governing our policies toward the U.S.S.R. United States policy is not likely soon to have much impact on China's behavior, let alone its ideological outlook. But it is certainly in our interest, and in the interest of peace and stability in Asia and the world, that we take what steps we can toward improved practical relations with Peking.

The leaders in Peking clearly understood the significance of the language in this report. Two days later, during a meeting in Warsaw with U.S. Ambassador Walter Stoessel, the Chinese ambassador dramatically suggested moving their hitherto sporadic and unproductive meetings to Peking. He also hinted that they would welcome a high-ranking American official as head of the delegation.

In March 1970 the State Department announced a relaxation of most of the official restrictions against travel to Communist China; in April we announced a further easing of trade controls.

Plans for moving the Warsaw talks to Peking received a setback in May when the Chinese canceled a scheduled meeting in protest of the Cambodian operation. For a few weeks it seemed as if the China initiative had collapsed. But the underlying logic of the initiative was based on clear-cut assessments of mutually advantageous interests, and I was
not surprised when, after a few months, the Chinese signaled that they were willing to resume our diplomatic minuet. In July, they released American Roman Catholic Bishop James Edward Walsh, who had been arrested in 1958 and held as a prisoner for twelve years.

Early in October I gave an interview to Time magazine. I said that: "If there is anything I want to do before I die, it is to go to China. If I don't, I want my children to."

On October 25 President Yahya Khan of Pakistan came to see me, and I used the occasion to establish the "Yahya channel." We had discussed the idea in general terms when I saw him on my visit to Pakistan in July 1969. Now I told him that we had decided to try to normalize our relations with China, and I asked for his help as an intermediary.

"Of course we will do anything we can to help," Yahya said, "but you must know how difficult this will be. Old enemies do not easily become new friends. It will be slow, and you must be prepared for setbacks."

The next day President Ceausescu of Romania arrived on a state visit. I had also discussed the need for a new Chinese-American relationship with him in Bucharest in 1969. My toast at the dinner in his honor was the first occasion on which an American President had intentionally referred to Communist China by its official name, the People's Republic of China; even my Foreign Policy Report had called it "Communist China." This was a significant diplomatic signal.

In my meeting with Ceausescu the next day, I said that, even short of the ultimate ideal of re-establishing full diplomatic relations with China, there could be an exchange of high-level personal representatives. He agreed to pass this word along to Peking, and this was the beginning of the "Romanian channel."

A month later, on November 22, I dictated a memorandum for Kissinger:

On a very confidential basis, I would like for you to have prepared in your staff—without any notice to people who might leak—a study of where we are to go with regard to the admission of Red China to the UN. It seems to me that the time is approaching sooner than we might think when we will not have the votes to block admission.

The question we really need an answer to is how we can develop a position in which we can keep our commitments to Taiwan and yet will not be rolled by those who favor admission of Red China.

There is no hurry on this study but within two or three months I would like to see what you come up with.

In fact, things were to move much faster than I had anticipated.

On December 9 Chou En-lai sent word through President Yahya that my representative would be welcome in Peking for a discussion of the question of Taiwan. Chou stressed that the message did not come from him alone but had been approved by Chairman Mao and by Lin Piao, still a powerful figure at that time. With characteristic subtlety, Chou concluded with a play on words. "We have had messages from the United States from different sources in the past," he said, "but this is the first time that the proposal has come from a Head, through a Head, to a Head."

Through Pakistani Ambassador Agha Hilaly we replied that any meeting should not be limited to a discussion of Taiwan, and we proposed that Chinese and American representatives meet in Pakistan to discuss the possibility of a high-level meeting in Peking in the future.

On December 18, American writer Edgar Snow had an interview with his old friend Mao Tse-tung. Mao told him that the Foreign Ministry was considering the question of allowing Americans of all political orientations—left, right, and center—to visit China. Snow asked whether a rightist like Nixon, who represented the "monopoly capitalists," would be permitted to come. Mao replied that I would be welcomed, because as President I was, after all, the one with whom the problems between China and the United States would have to be solved. Mao said that he would be happy to talk to the President, whether he came as a tourist or as President. We learned of Mao's statement within a few days after he made it.

Early in 1971 the Romanian channel became active. Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan called on Kissinger with the news that after our conversation in October, Ceausescu had sent his Vice Premier to Peking, and Chou En-lai had given him a message for me. It read:

The communication from the U.S. President is not new. There is only one outstanding issue between us—the U.S. occupation of Taiwan. The P.R.C. has attempted to negotiate on this issue in good faith for fifteen years. If the U.S. has a desire to settle the issue and a proposal for its solution, the P.R.C. will be prepared to receive a U.S. special envoy in Peking. This message has been reviewed by Chairman Mao and by Lin Piao.

Chou En-lai had also commented that in view of the fact that I had visited Bucharest in 1969 and Belgrade in 1970, I would be welcome in Peking.

We were encouraged by this message. As Kissinger noted, the tone was reassuringly free of invective, and the absence of any references to Vietnam indicated that Peking would not consider the war an insurmountable obstacle to U.S.-Chinese rapprochement.

I did my best to make sure that the Lam Son operation at the beginning of 1971 did not cut off this budding relationship as the Cambodian operation had threatened to do the year before. In a press conference on
February 17 I stressed that our intervention in Laos should not be interpreted as any threat to China. In Peking the People's Daily, the official government newspaper, vehemently rejected my statement: “By spreading the flames of war to the door of China, U.S. imperialism is on a course posing a grave menace to China... Nixon has indeed fully laid bare his ferocious features, and reached the zenith in arrogance.”

On February 25, 1971, five days after this tirade was published, I submitted to Congress my second Foreign Policy Report. This time a section dealing with the People’s Republic of China canvassed the possibilities for an expanded relationship between our nations and reflected the eventuality of Peking's admission to the UN. It concluded:

In the coming year, I will carefully examine what further steps we might take to create broader opportunities for contacts between the Chinese and American peoples, and how we might remove needless obstacles to the realization of these opportunities. We hope for, but will not be deterred by a lack of, reciprocity.

We should, however, be totally realistic about the prospects. The People’s Republic of China continues to convey to its own people and to the world its determination to cast us in the devil's role. Our modest efforts to prove otherwise have not reduced Peking’s doctrinaire enmity toward us... So long as Peking continues to be adamant for hostility, there is little we can do by ourselves to improve the relationship. What we can do, we will.

On March 15 the State Department announced the termination of all restrictions on the use of American passports for travel to mainland China. On April 6 a breakthrough occurred in a totally unexpected way: we received word from the American Embassy in Tokyo that an American table tennis team competing in the world championships in Japan had been invited to visit the P.R.C. in order to play several exhibition matches.

I was as surprised as I was pleased by this news. I had never expected that the China initiative would come to fruition in the form of a Ping-Pong team. We immediately approved the acceptance of the invitation, and the Chinese responded by granting visas to several Western newsmen to cover the team's tour.

On April 14 I announced the termination of the twenty-year-old embargo on trade between us. I also ordered a series of new steps taken for easing currency and shipping controls applying to the P.R.C. The same day Chou En-lai personally welcomed our table tennis players in Peking.

When I spoke to the convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, a few days later, I was asked about the meaning of the recent events involving the P.R.C. I replied that we were seeing an ordered policy process beginning to bear fruit. I said that I would have to disappoint the editors if they were looking for hot head- line news, but the very nature of the new relationship made that impossible. I concluded with an observation that I am sure many of my listeners dismissed as simply a personal digression; in fact, it was a direct clue.

“The other day was Easter Sunday,” I began. “Both of my daughters, Tricia and Julie, were there—and Tricia with Eddie Cox—I understand they are getting married this June—and Julie and David Eisenhower.

“And the conversation got around to travel and also, of course, with regard to honeymoon travel and the rest. They were asking me where would you like to go? Where do you think we ought to go?

“So, I sat back and thought a bit and said, 'Well, the place to go is to Asia.' I said, 'I hope that sometime in your life, sooner rather than later, you will be able to go to China to see the great cities, and the people, and all of that, there.'

“I hope they do. As a matter of fact, I hope sometime I do. I am not sure that it is going to happen while I am in office. I will not speculate with regard to either of the diplomatic points. It is premature to talk about recognition. It is premature also to talk about a change of our policy with regard to the United Nations.”

At this point a bull in the form of Ted Agnew inadvertently careened into this diplomatic China shop. During a long postmidnight session with a group of reporters in his hotel room after he arrived for the Republican Governors Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, Agnew told them that the favorable media coverage of the table tennis team’s visit to Peking had helped the Communist Chinese government score a propaganda triumph. He noted that some reporters had sent back almost lyrical descriptions of the contented and productive lives led by the residents of Peking.

Agnew had expressed his reservations about our trade and visa overtures to the Chinese Communists at a recent NSC meeting, but I had never imagined that he would discuss his doubts with reporters. I told Haldeman to get word to Agnew to stay off this topic.

The tempo began to speed up considerably. On April 27 Ambassador Hilaly came to the White House with another message from Chou En-lai via President Yahya. After the ritual insistence that Taiwan was the principal and prerequisite problem, which had to be resolved before any relations could be restored, the message added that the Chinese were now interested in direct discussions as means of reaching that settlement, and therefore “the Chinese government reaffirms its willingness to receive publicly in Peking a special envoy of the President of the U.S. (for instance, Mr. Kissinger) or the U.S. Secretary of State or even the President of the U.S. himself for a direct meeting and discussion.”

In some important respects this message raised as many problems as it
solved. Taiwan was still mentioned as the central issue. Further, the Chinese spoke of publicly receiving an envoy in Peking. I felt that in order for the initiative to have any chance of succeeding, it would have to be kept totally secret until the final arrangements for the presidential visit had been agreed upon. With advance warning conservative opposition might mobilize in Congress and scuttle the entire effort.

Kissinger and I spent the next few days trying to decide who to send to Peking for these initial talks.

The best man, we agreed, would be David Bruce, but we ruled him out because he was our negotiator in Paris and the Chinese would undoubtedly resent our sending someone so closely identified with Vietnam. We also considered Cabot Lodge, but he was even more identified with Vietnam than was Bruce.

“Well, what about Bill then?” I asked. “If we send the Secretary of State, they’ll sure as hell know we’re serious.” Kissinger rolled his eyes upward. I knew that he would have opposed Rogers on personal grounds regardless, but in this case he had good policy reasons. The Secretary of State had too high a profile for these first talks. Besides, there was almost no way he could go to China secretly.

Finally I said, “Henry, I think you will have to do it.”

He objected that, like Rogers, he had too much visibility.

I said, “I am confident that a man who can come and go undetected in Paris can get in and out of Peking before anyone finds out.”

At my news conference on April 29 I gave another major clue to what was afoot. But once again even the most rigorous monitors and analysts of Nixon rhetoric failed to pick up the point I was making.

Since none of the reporters had asked me anything about the specific possibility of a visit to China, I asked it of myself. At the end of my reply to a general question about our China policy, I said, “I would finally suggest—I know this question may come up if I don’t answer it now—I hope, and, as a matter of fact, I expect to visit mainland China sometime in some capacity—I don’t know what capacity. But that indicates what I hope for the long term. And I hope to contribute to a policy in which we can have a new relationship with mainland China.”

About the same time the issue of Life containing Edgar Snow’s December interview with Mao appeared on the newsstands. Now it was public that Mao would welcome me to Peking.

Messages and signals had been going back and forth for more than two years. We had proceeded carefully and cautiously through the Yahya and Romanian channels. Now Kissinger and I agreed that we had reached a point at which we had to take the chance of making a major proposal, or risk slipping back into another long round of tentative probing. I decided that the time had come to take the big step and propose a presidential visit.

On May 10, therefore, Kissinger called in Ambassador Hilaly and gave him a message for Chou En-lai via President Yahya. It stated that because of the importance I attached to the normalizing of relations between the two countries, I was prepared to accept Chou’s invitation to visit Peking. I proposed that Kissinger undertake a secret visit in advance of my trip in order to arrange an agenda and begin a preliminary exchange of views.

The die was cast. There was nothing left to do but wait for Chou’s reply. If we had acted too soon, if we had not established a sufficiently strong foundation, or if we had overestimated the ability of Mao and Chou to deal with their internal opposition to such a visit, then all our long careful efforts would be wasted. I might even have to be prepared for serious international embarrassment if the Chinese decided to reject my proposal and then publicize it.

For almost two weeks we waited, wondering what kind of decision-making process was under way in Peking.

Then on May 31 we received a message from President Yahya Khan through Ambassador Hilaly. It read:

1. There is a very encouraging and positive response to the last message.

2. Please convey to Mr. Kissinger that the meeting will take place on Chinese soil for which travel arrangements will be made by us.

3. Level of meeting will be as proposed by you.

4. Full message will be transmitted by safe means.

Two nights later, we gave a state dinner for President Somoza of Nicaragua. After Pat and I had finished having coffee with our guests in the Blue Room, I went to the Lincoln Sitting Room to do some paperwork and reading. In less than five minutes Kissinger walked in. He must have run most of the way from the West Wing, because he was out of breath.

He handed me two sheets of typewritten paper. “This just arrived in the Pakistani Embassy pouch,” he said. “Hilaly rushed it over, and he was so excited when he gave it to me that his hands were shaking.”

Kissinger stood beaming as I read the message:

Premier Chou En-lai has seriously studied President Nixon’s messages of April 29, May 17, and May 22, 1971, and has reported with much pleasure to Chairman Mao Tse-tung that President Nixon is prepared to accept his suggestion to visit Peking for direct conversations with the leaders of the
People's Republic of China. Chairman Mao Tse-tung has indicated that he welcomes President Nixon's visit and looks forward to that occasion when he may have direct conversations with His Excellency the President, in which each side would be free to raise the principal issue of concern to it.

Premier Chou En-lai welcomes Dr. Kissinger to China as the U.S. representative who will come in advance for a preliminary secret meeting with high level Chinese officials to prepare and make necessary arrangements for President Nixon's visit to Peking.

"This is the most important communication that has come to an American President since the end of World War II," Kissinger said when I had finished reading.

For nearly an hour we talked about the China initiative—what it might mean to America and how delicately it must be handled lest we lose it. It was close to midnight before we noticed the time, and Kissinger rose to go.

"Henry, I know that, like me, you never have anything to drink after dinner, and it is very late," I said, "but I think this is one of those occasions when we should make an exception. Wait here just a minute."

I got up and walked down the corridor to the small family kitchen at the other end of the second floor. In one of the cabinets I found an opened bottle of very old Courvoisier brandy that someone had given us for Christmas. I tucked it under my arm and took two large snifters from the glass cupboard. As we raised our glasses, I said, "Henry, we are drinking a toast not to ourselves personally or to our success, or to our administration's policies which have made this message and made tonight possible. Let us drink to generations to come who may have a better chance to live in peace because of what we have done."

As I write them now, my words sound rather formal, but the moment was one not just of high personal elation, but of a profound mutual understanding that this truly was a moment of historical significance.

On July 6 I flew to Kansas City to address a large group of Midwestern news media executives attending one of the periodic briefings on administration policies that we held in different parts of the country.

Kissinger was in the middle of a ten-day mission to the Far East and just days away from his secret trip to Peking. Before he got there I wanted to place on the record an outline of the reasons for approaching China.

I told the gathering that the potential of China, though obscured to most American observers by its isolation, was such that no sensible foreign policy could ignore or exclude it. "That is the reason why I felt that it was essential that this administration take the first steps toward ending the isolation of mainland China from the world community," I said. Despite the recent flurry of activity I said that I did not hold out any great hopes of rapid advances in our relations. "What we have done is simply opened the door—opened the door for travel, opened the door for trade," I said. "Now the question is whether there will be other doors opened on their part.... Mainland China, outside the world community, completely isolated, with its leaders not in communication with world leaders, would be a danger to the whole world that would be unacceptable, unacceptable to us and unacceptable to others as well. So consequently, this step must be taken now. Others must be taken, very precisely, very deliberately, as there is reciprocation on the other side."

My speech received relatively little attention in Kansas City. As we were to learn later, however, it received a great deal of attention in Peking.

We arranged that Kissinger would fly to Vietnam for consultations early in July and then stop in Pakistan on the way back. There he would develop a stomachache that would require him to stay in bed and not be seen by the press. Then, with President Yahya's cooperation, he would be taken to an airport where a Pakistani jet would fly him over the mountains into China. The stomachache was scheduled for July 9-11. Kissinger would then fly to San Clemente to report to me.

Kissinger's trip was given the codename Polo after Marco Polo, another Western traveler who made history by journeying to China. Everything went without a hitch. His indisposition in Islamabad received only minor attention from reporters covering him. They accepted the story that he would be confined to bed for at least a couple of days and began making arrangements for their own entertainment.

Because of the need for complete secrecy and the lack of any direct communications facilities between Peking and Washington, I knew that we would have no word from Kissinger while he was in China. Even after he had returned to Pakistan it would still be important to maintain secrecy, so before Kissinger left, we agreed on a single codeword—Eureka—which he would use if his mission were successful and the presidential trip had been arranged.

Although I was confident that the Chinese were as ready for my trip as we were, I did not underestimate the tremendous problems that Taiwan and Vietnam posed for both sides, and I tried to discipline myself not to expect anything lest I begin to expect too much.

On July 11 Al Haig, who knew our codeword, phoned me to say that a cable from Kissinger had arrived.

"What's the message?" I asked.

"Eureka," he replied.

Kissinger's description of his time in China was fascinating. The Chinese had agreed to virtually everything we proposed regarding the ar-
rangements and schedule for my trip. The preliminary talks had covered
the whole range of issues and problems that lay between our two coun-
tries. He found the Chinese tough, idealistic, fanatical, single-minded,
remarkable, and uncomfortably aware of the philosophical contradic-
tions involved in their arranging a visit by their capitalist archenemy.
“These were men in some anguish,” Kissinger said.

Most of all, Kissinger was impressed by Chou En-lai. The two men
spent seventeen hours together in meetings and informal conversa-
tion, and Kissinger found that “he was equally at home in philosophic
sweepes, historical analysis, tactical probing, light repartee. His command of
facts, and in particular his knowledge of American events, was remark-
able.” At one point Chou asked about my Kansas City speech, and Kis-
singer had to admit that he had read only the press reports. The next
morning at breakfast Kissinger found a copy of my speech, with Chou’s
underlinings and marginal notations in Chinese, lying on the table with
a note requesting that he return it because it was Chou’s only copy.

In a brilliant summing up of his long report after the trip, Kissinger
wrote:

We have laid the groundwork for you and Mao to turn a page in history.
But we should have no illusions about the future. Profound differences and
years of isolation yawn between us and the Chinese. They will be tough be-
fore and during the summit on the question of Taiwan and other major is-
Sues. And they will prove implacable foes if our relations turn sour. My as-
Sessment of these people is that they are deeply ideological, close to fanatic
in the intensity of their beliefs. At the same time they display an inward se-
curity that allows them, within the framework of their principles, to be
muciligious and reliable in dealing with others.

Our dealings, both with the Chinese and others, will require reliability, pre-
cision, finesse. If we can master this process, we will have made a revolution.

On July 15 I made the televised announcement that I would be going
to Peking. Most of the initial reactions were overwhelmingly positive.
Max Lerner wrote, “The politics of surprise leads through the Gates of
Astonishment into the Kingdom of Hope.”

Some commentators joined the more partisan Democrats in temper-
ing their praise with speculation that my motives had been political.
Most of the serious criticism, however, came, as I had expected, from the
conservatives. Congressman John Schmitz of California charged me
with “surrendering to international communism” by accepting the in-
vitation. George Wallace did not actually condemn the trip, but he
warned me against “begging, pleading, and groveling” before the Chi-
inese Communists. He told reporters that he suspected the trip was ac-
tually a diversionary tactic to get people’s minds off “inflation and the
high cost of pork chops.”

The reaction abroad to our China initiative was generally favorable,
but there were some understandable reservations. Our friends in Taiwan
were terribly distressed. However, they were reassured that we did not
withdraw our recognition of their government and did not renounce our
mutual defense commitment. The Japanese presented a particularly dif-
ficult problem. They resented the fact that they had not been informed
in advance, but we had no other choice. We could not have informed them
without informing others, thus risking a leak that might have aborted the
entire initiative.

As soon as I returned to Washington from San Clemente, I held a
briefing for the bipartisan leadership in the Cabinet Room. I stressed
the need for secrecy, because the more we had to put things into words,
the less freedom of movement we would have in our dealings with the
Chinese. I understood how difficult it would be for many of them, but I
had to ask that they trust me. To a man, they came through splendidly.
John Stennis said, “The President has made a good move; now it’s up to
him to follow through, and I’m going to back him up.”

Mike Mansfield said, that the China initiative was like the Manhat-
tan Project: secrecy was absolutely essential to the success of each.

Kissinger returned to China on October 20 for Polo II. This time his
six-day trip was publicly announced. Its purpose was to prepare the
agenda for the meetings I would have with the Chinese leaders and to
work out the basic language of the communiqué that would be issued at
the end of my trip.

The draft communiqué that I had approved for submission to the
Chinese had followed the standard diplomatic formula of using vague
and conciliatory language to patch over the most heated and insoluble
problems.

Kissinger was somewhat taken aback when Chou stated that our ap-
proach to the communiqué was unacceptable. He said that unless it
expressed our fundamental differences, the wording would have an “un-
truthful appearance.” He dismissed our proposed draft as the sort of
banal document the Soviets would sign without meaning it and without
planning to observe it.

The Chinese then handed Kissinger a counterdraft that took his
breath away. If ours had smoothed over differences, theirs underscored
them. With great self-control, Kissinger read it and calmly said, “We
cannot have an American President sign a document which says that
revolution has become the irresistible trend of history, or that ‘the peo-
ple’s revolutionary struggles are just!’”

The Chinese seemed disconcerted, but Kissinger continued. We could
not allow any references to racial discrimination; we opposed it as much
as did the Chinese, but mention in this communiqué would be interpret-
ed as criticism of American domestic problems. Similarly, their proposed references to China as “the reliable rear area” of North Vietnam, and to Chinese support for the Indochinese peoples’ “fighting to the end for the attainment of their goal” were unacceptable phrasing while Americans were fighting or being held prisoner in Indochina.

After this initial session, Kissinger found that the Chinese were willing to compromise on a communiqué that would state the underlying goals of the summit while retaining each side’s basic position expressed in noninflammatory language.

Kissinger summed up these long and sometimes difficult sessions by saying that the Chinese were willing to pursue their objectives by banking on the thrust of history rather than on the specific wording of a communiqué. “They will continue to be tough,” he wrote, “but they essentially accept our arguments that we can often do more than we say, that the process must be gradual, and that some issues must be left to evolutionary pressures. This involves great risks for them, at home and abroad, given their past public demands and dissidents in their own camp.”

Kissinger reported that toward the end of the talks Chou had specifically pointed out that they could be in real trouble if my administration was not in power. “He shares what he described as your wish that you preside over the 200th anniversary of America’s birth.”

While Kissinger was in China on Polo II, the United Nations General Assembly moved to vote on the question of admitting the People’s Republic of China as a member nation. I instructed Kissinger to stay away an extra day so that he would not have just arrived home when this controversial vote was taken.

As early as August we had publicly withdrawn our opposition to consideration of this question and indicated our support of the concept of the “two Chinas,” Chiang Kai-shek’s Republic of China on Taiwan and the Communist People’s Republic of China, each to have membership in the world organization.

It had not been easy for me to take a position that would be so disappointing to our old friend and loyal ally, Chiang. I had learned as early as the spring, however, that the traditional vote bloc opposed to Peking’s admission had irreparably broken up, and several of our erstwhile supporters had decided to support Peking at the next vote. Personally, I have never believed in bowing to the inevitable just because it is inevitable. In this case, however, I felt that the national security interests of the United States lay in developing our relations with the P.R.C. Besides, regardless of what happened in the UN, I was determined to honor our treaty obligations by continuing our military and economic support for an independent Taiwan.

On October 25 the UN voted 76 to 35, with 17 abstentions, to expel Taiwan and to admit the P.R.C. as the sole government representing China. This went much further than we had expected: we had thought that our greatest problem would be in convincing Taiwan to stay after the P.R.C. had been admitted to equal status.

A few days before leaving for China, I invited the great French writer and philosopher André Malraux to the White House.

Malraux had known Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai in China during the 1930s and had kept up intermittent contact with them through the years. His description of the Chinese leaders in his Anti-Memoirs was among the most valuable and fascinating reading I had done in preparation for my trip.

Malraux was then seventy years old. Time had not dimmed the brilliance of his thought or the quickness of his wit. Even after his elegant French had been filtered through a State Department interpreter, his language was original and striking.

During the talk I had with him in the Oval Office, I asked whether just a few years ago he would have thought that the Chinese leaders would agree to meet with an American President.

“This meeting was inevitable,” he replied.

“Even with the Vietnam war?” I asked.

“Ah yes, even so. China’s action over Vietnam is an imposture. There was a period when the friendship between China and Russia was cloudless, when they allowed Russian arms to pass over their territory on the way to Vietnam. But China has never helped anyone! Not Pakistan. Not Vietnam. China’s foreign policy is a brilliant lie! The Chinese themselves do not believe in it; they believe only in China. Only China! “For Mao, China is a continent—it is an Australia by itself. Only China is important. If China has to receive the Sultan of Zanzibar, then China will. Or the President of the United States. The Chinese don’t care.”

I asked Malraux for his impressions of Mao. “Five years ago,” he said, “Mao had one fear: that the Americans or the Russians, with ten atom bombs, would destroy China’s industrial centers and set China back fifty years at a time when Mao himself would be dead. He told me, ‘When I have six atomic bombs, no one can bomb my cities.’ ” Malraux said that he had not understood what Mao meant by that. He continued, “Then Mao said, ‘The Americans will never use an atom bomb against me.’ I did not understand that either, but I am repeating it for you be-
cause often it is what one does not understand that is most important. I did not ask Mao any more questions about it, because one does not ask Mao questions."

Malraux rushed on with a torrent of words and ideas. 

"You will be dealing with a colossus," he said, "but a colossus facing death. The last time I saw him he told me, 'We do not have a successor.' Do you know what Mao will think when he sees you for the first time?" he asked. "He will think, 'He is so much younger than I!'"

That evening at a dinner in his honor in the Residence, Malraux advised me on how to approach my conversation with Mao.

"Mr. President, you will meet a man who has had a fantastic destiny and who believes that he is acting out the last act of his lifetime. You may think he is talking to you, but he will in truth be addressing Death.... It's worth the trip!"

I asked him again what came after Mao. Malraux replied, "It is exactly as Mao said, he has no successor. What did he mean by it? He meant that in his view the great leaders—Churchill, Gandhi, de Gaulle—were created by the kind of traumatic historical events that will not occur in the world anymore. In that sense he feels that he has no successors. I once asked him if he did not think of himself as the heir of the last great Chinese emperors of the sixteenth century. Mao said, 'But of course I am their heir.' Mr. President, you operate within a rational framework, but Mao does not. There is something of the sorcerer in him. He is a man inhabited by a vision, possessed by it."

I remarked that this kind of mystique was present in many great men. People who knew Lincoln said that they always felt he was looking beyond the horizon—as if there were a space between the earth and the sky where his gaze was focused. On the day of his assassination he had told his Cabinet about a dream he had the night before: he had seemed to be in some "singular indescribable vessel" moving with great rapidity toward an indefinite shore. "We don't know where or what the shore is to be in some 'singular indescribable vessel' moving with great rapidity toward an indefinite shore, "We don't know where or what the shore is but we must avoid the shoals in trying to reach it," I said.

Malraux said, "You have spoken of avoiding the shoals to reach the shore. I feel that Mao has the same view. And even though both you and he are aware of the shoals, neither of you know what lies on the shore beyond. Mao knows, however, that his harbor is Death."

Later, over coffee, Malraux told me, "You are about to attempt one of the most important things of our century. I think of the sixteenth-century explorers, who set out for a specific objective but often arrived at an entirely different discovery. What you are going to do, Mr. President, might well have a totally different outcome from whatever is anticipated."

At the end of the evening I escorted Malraux to his car. As we stood on the steps of the North Portico, he turned to me and said, "I am not de Gaulle, but I know what de Gaulle would say if he were here. He would say: 'All men who understand what you are embarking upon salute you!'"

On February 17, 1972, at 10:35 A.M. we left Andrews Air Force Base for Peking. As the plane gathered speed and then took to the air, I thought of Malraux's words. We were embarking upon a voyage of philosophical discovery as uncertain, and in some respects as perilous, as the voyages of geographical discovery of a much earlier time.

**Diary**

As Henry and Bob both pointed out on the plane, there was almost a religious feeling to the messages we received from all over the country, wishing us well. I told Henry that I thought it was really a question of the American people being hopelessly and almost naively for peace, even at any price. He felt that perhaps there was also some ingredient of excitement about the boldness of the move, and visiting a land that was unknown to so many Americans.

We stopped briefly in Shanghai to take aboard Chinese Foreign Ministry officials and a Chinese navigator; an hour and a half later we prepared to land in Peking. I looked out the window. It was winter, and the countryside was drab and gray. The small towns and villages looked like pictures I had seen of towns in the Middle Ages.

Our plane landed smoothly, and a few minutes later we came to a stop in front of the terminal. The door was opened, and Pat and I stepped out.

Chou En-lai stood at the foot of the ramp, hatless in the cold. Even a heavy overcoat did not hide the thinness of his frail body. When we were about halfway down the steps, he began to clap. I paused for a moment and then returned the gesture, according to the Chinese custom.

I knew that Chou had been deeply insulted by Foster Dulles's refusal to shake hands with him at the Geneva Conference in 1954. When I reached the bottom step, therefore, I made a point of extending my hand as I walked toward him. When our hands met, one era ended and another began.

After being introduced to all the Chinese officials, I stood on Chou's left while the band played the anthems. "The Star-Spangled Banner" had never sounded so stirring to me as on that windswept runway in the heart of Communist China.

The honor guard was one of the finest I have ever seen. They were big
men, strong-looking, and immaculately turned out. As I walked down the long line, each man turned his head slowly as I passed, creating an almost hypnotic sense of movement in the massed ranks.

Chou and I rode into the city in a curtained car. As we left the airport, he said, "Your handshake came over the vastest ocean in the world—twenty-five years of no communication." When we came into Tienamen Square at the center of Peking, he pointed out some of the buildings; I noticed that the streets were empty.

Madame Chou was waiting for us when we arrived at the two large government guesthouses where our official party was to stay. We had tea in the sitting room, and then Chou said that he was sure everyone would like to rest before the state banquet.

About an hour later I was getting ready to take a shower when Kissinger burst in with the news that Chairman Mao wanted to meet me. Late that night I described the atmosphere of the meeting.

Diary

Coming in on the plane Rogers had expressed concern that we ought to have a meeting with Mao very soon, and that we couldn't be in a position of my seeing him in a way that put him above me, like walking up the stairs or him standing at the top of the stairs.

Our concerns in this respect were completely dissipated at about two o'clock when Henry came into the room breathlessly, and told me that Chou was downstairs and said that the Chairman wanted to see me now at his residence. I waited about five minutes while Henry went downstairs, and then we drove to the residence.

We were escorted into a room that was not elaborate, filled with books and papers. Several of the books were open to various pages on the coffee table next to where he was sitting. His girl secretary helped him to his feet. When I shook his hand, he said, "I can't talk very well." Chou later told me that he had been sick for about a month with what was described as bronchitis. This, however, was not known to the Chinese public.

Everybody, including Chou, showed him the deference that was due him. Two or three of the military and the civilian people were standing in the room, and about ten minutes through the conversation Chou waved them out. I noted, however, that they remained standing in the hall watching.

The transcript of the conversation may not have caught probably the most moving moment, when he reached out his hand, and I reached out mine, and he held it for about a minute.

It is obvious that he has a remarkable sense of humor. He kept bringing Henry into the conversation, and while it was supposed to be ten or fifteen minutes it extended to almost an hour. I saw Chou look at his watch two or three times and realized that I probably should break it up in order not to tax him too much.

It was interesting to note that later at the plenary session, Chou constantly referred back to the meeting with Mao and what Mao had said.

Several Chinese photographers had rushed in ahead of us in order to record our first meeting. We all sat in overstuffed armchairs set in a semicircle at the end of the long room. While the photographers continued to bustle around, we exchanged bantering small talk. Kissinger remarked that he had assigned Mao's writings to his classes at Harvard. Indulging in characteristic self-deprecation, Mao said, "These writings of mine aren't anything. There is nothing instructive in what I wrote." I said, "The Chairman's writings moved a nation and have changed the world." Mao, however, replied, "I haven't been able to change it. I've only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Peking."

Although Mao spoke with some difficulty, it was clear that his mind was moving like lightning. "Our common old friend Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek doesn't approve of this," he said, with a sweeping gesture that might have meant our meeting or that might have taken in all China. "He calls us Communist bandits. He recently made a speech. Have you seen it?"

"Chiang Kai-shek calls the Chairman a bandit," I replied. "What does the Chairman call Chiang Kai-shek?"

Mao chuckled when my question was translated, but it was Chou who answered. "Generally speaking, we call them 'Chiang Kai-shek's clique,'" he said. "In the newspapers sometimes we call him a bandit; he calls us bandits in turn. Anyway, we abuse each other."

"Actually," Mao said, "the history of our friendship with him is much longer than the history of your friendship with him."

Mao remarked on Kissinger's cleverness in keeping his first trip to Peking secret. "He doesn't look like a secret agent," I said. "He is the only man in captivity who could go to Paris twelve times and Peking once, and no one knew it—except possibly a couple of pretty girls."

"They didn't know it," Kissinger interjected, "I used it as a cover."

"In Paris?" Mao asked with mock disbelief.

"Anyone who uses pretty girls as a cover must be the greatest diplomat of all time," I said.

"So you often make use of your girls?" Mao asked.
"His girls, not mine," I replied. "It would get me into great trouble if I used girls as a cover."

"Especially during an election," Chou remarked as Mao joined in the laughter.

Referring to our presidential election, Mao said that in honesty he had to tell me that if the Democrats won the Chinese would deal with them.

"We understand," I said. "We will hope that we don't give you that problem."

"I voted for you during your last election," Mao said with a broad smile.

"When the Chairman says he voted for me," I replied, "he voted for the lesser of two evils."

"I like rightists," Mao responded, obviously enjoying himself. "People say that you are rightists—that the Republican Party is on the right—that Prime Minister Heath is also to the right."

"And General de Gaulle," I added.

Without dropping a beat, Mao said, "De Gaulle is a different question." Then he continued, "They also say the Christian Democratic Party of West Germany is to the right. I am comparatively happy when these people on the right come into power.

"I think the most important thing to note is that in America, at least at this time, those on the right can do what those on the left can only talk about," I said.

When the conversation moved to the history of our meeting, Mao remarked, "The former President of Pakistan introduced President Nixon to us. At that time, our ambassador in Pakistan refused to agree to our having any contact with you. He said that President Nixon was no better than President Johnson. But President Yahya said, 'The two men cannot be compared.' He said that one was like a gangster—he meant President Johnson. I don't know how he got that impression, although we on our side were not very happy with your former Presidents, beginning with Truman through Johnson. In between there were eight years of a Republican President. During that period probably you hadn't thought things out either."

"Mr. Chairman," I said, "I am aware of the fact that over a period of years my position with regard to the People's Republic was one that the Chairman and the Prime Minister totally disagreed with. What brings us together is a recognition of a new situation in the world and a recognition on our part that what is important is not a nation's internal political philosophy. What is important is its policy toward the rest of the world and toward us."

Although the meeting with Mao dealt mainly with what he called the "philosophy" of our new and potential relationship, I raised in general terms the major substantive questions we would be discussing. I said that we should examine our policies and determine how they should develop in order to deal with the entire world as well as the immediate problems of Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan.

I went on, "We, for example, must ask ourselves—again in the confines of this room—why the Soviets have more forces on the border facing you than they do on the border facing Western Europe? We must ask ourselves, What is the future of Japan? Is it better—and here I know we have disagreements—from China's standpoint for Japan to be neutral and totally defenseless, or is it better for Japan to have some mutual defense relations with the United States? One thing is sure—we can leave no vacuums, because they can be filled. The Prime Minister, for example, has pointed out that the United States 'reaches out its hands' and that the Soviet Union 'reaches out its hands.' The question is, which danger does the People's Republic of China face? Is it the danger of American aggression—or of Soviet aggression? These are hard questions, but we have to discuss them."

Mao was animated and following every nuance of the conversation, but I could see that he was also becoming very tired. Chou had been discreetly glancing at his watch with increasing frequency, so I decided that I should try to bring the session to a close.

"I would like to say, as we finish, Mr. Chairman, that we know you and the Prime Minister have taken great risks in inviting us here. For us also it was a difficult decision. But having read some of your statements, I know that you are one who sees when an opportunity comes, and then knows that you must seize the hour and seize the day."

Mao's face beamed when the translator came to these words from his own poem.

I continued, "I would also like to say in a personal sense—and I also say this to you, Mr. Prime Minister—you do not know me. Since you do not know me, you shouldn't trust me. You will find I never say something I cannot do. And I always will do more than I can say. On this basis, I want to have frank talks with the Chairman and, of course, with the Prime Minister."

Mao pointed toward Kissinger and said, " 'Seize the hour and seize the day.' I think that, generally speaking, people like me sound like a lot of big cannons!" Chou laughed, and it was clear that we were in for another bit of self-deprecation. "For example, things like, 'The whole world should unite and defeat imperialism, revisionism, and all reactionaries, and establish socialism.'"

"Like me," I said. "And bandits."

Mao leaned forward and smiled. "But perhaps you as an individual may not be among those to be overthrown," he said. Motioning toward
Kissinger, he continued, "They say that he is also among those not to be overthrown personally. If all of you are overthrown, we wouldn't have any more friends left."

"Mr. Chairman," I said, "your life is well known to all of us. You came from a very poor family to the top of the most populous nation in the world, a great nation.

"My background is not so well known. I also came from a very poor family, and to the top of a very great nation. History has brought us together. The question is whether we, with different philosophies, but both with feet on the ground, and having come from the people, can make a breakthrough that will serve not just China and America, but the whole world in the years ahead. And that is why we are here."

As we were leaving, Mao said, "Your book, Six Crises, is not a bad book."

Looking at Chou, I smiled and shook my head and said, "He reads too much."

Mao walked us to the door. His walk was a slow shuffle, and he said that he had not been feeling well.

"But you look very good," I replied.

"Appearances are deceiving," he said with a slight shrug.

The first plenary session with Chou at the Great Hall of the People was cut short because of the unscheduled meeting with Mao, and we talked only in general terms about the way our meetings would proceed. Chou preferred a format in which one side presented its views on a subject at one session and the other side responded at the next.

The most difficult and touchiest part of the trip would be the joint communiqué, and I reaffirmed our pragmatic approach to it. "The conventional way to handle a meeting at the summit like this, while the whole world is watching," I said, "is to have meetings for several days, which we will have, to have discussions and discover differences, which we will do, and then put out a weasel-worded communiqué covering up the problems."

"If we were to act like that we would be not only deceiving the people, but we would be deceiving ourselves," Chou replied.

"That is adequate when meetings are between states that do not affect the future of the world," I said, "but we would not be meeting our responsibility for meetings which the whole world is watching, and which will affect our friends in the Pacific and all over the world for years to come. As we begin these meetings we have no illusions that we will solve everything. But we can set in motion a process which will enable us to solve many of these problems in the future. The men in this room and the women in this room have fought a long hard struggle for a revolution which has succeeded. We know you believe deeply in your principles, and we believe deeply in our principles. We do not ask you to compromise your principles, just as you would not ask us to compromise ours."

Perhaps the mention of opposing principles triggered the thought, because Chou remarked, "As you said to Chairman Mao this afternoon, today we shook hands," he said. "But John Foster Dulles didn't want to do that."

"But you said you didn't want to shake hands with him," I countered.

"Not necessarily," Chou replied. "I would have."

"Well, we will shake hands," I said, and once again we shook hands across the table.

Chou seemed to warm to the subject, and he continued. "Dulles's assistant, Mr. Walter Bedell Smith, wanted to do differently, but he did not break the discipline of John Foster Dulles, so he had to hold a cup of coffee in his right hand. Since one doesn't shake hands with the left hand, he used it to shake my arm." Everyone laughed, including Chou. "But at that time, we couldn't blame you," he said, "because the international viewpoint was that the socialist countries were a monolithic bloc, and the Western countries were also a monolithic bloc. Now we understand that that is not the case."

"We have broken out of the old pattern," I agreed. "We look at each country in terms of its own conduct rather than lumping them all together and saying that because they have this kind of philosophy they are all in utter darkness. I would say in honesty to the Prime Minister that my views, because I was in the Eisenhower administration, were similar to those of Mr. Dulles at that time. But the world has changed since then, and the relationship between the People's Republic and the United States must change too. As the Prime Minister has said in a meeting with Dr. Kissinger, the helmsman must ride with the waves or he will be submerged with the tide."

By the time we met for the banquet at the Great Hall of the People an hour later, the Chinese group seemed to be much more at ease. Perhaps it was because Mao had now given his official blessing to the visit—or perhaps it was simply that we had already begun to get along well with each other.

In my toast I tried to give idealistic expression to the pragmatic underpinnings of the China initiative:

"We have at times in the past been enemies. We have great differences today. What brings us together is that we have common interests which transcend those differences. As we discuss our differences, neither of us will compromise our principles. But while we cannot close the gulfs between us, we can try to bridge it so that we may be able to talk across it."

564
So, let us, in these next five days, start a long march together, not in lockstep, but on different roads leading to the same goal, the goal of building a world structure of peace and justice. ... The world watches. The world listens. The world awaits to see what we will do. ...

There is no reason for us to be enemies. Neither of us seeks the territory of the other; neither of us seeks domination over the other; neither of us seeks to stretch out our hands and rule the world.

Chairman Mao has written, 'So many deeds cry out to be done, and always urgently. The world rolls on. Time passes. Ten thousand years are too long. Seize the day, seize the hour.'

This is the hour, this is the day for our two peoples to rise to the heights of greatness which can build a new and a better world.

After the toasts, the orchestra played "America the Beautiful," and I remarked that this was one of the songs I had chosen for my inauguration in 1969. Chou raised his glass and said, "Here's to your next inauguration!"

When we met at the Great Hall of the People the next afternoon I reminded Chou that despite what he might be reading in some American press reports of the trip, I had no sentimental illusions about what was going on: "Now we say, and most of our rather naive American press buys this line, that the new relationship between China and America is due to the fact we have a basic friendship between our peoples. But the Prime Minister knows and I know that friendship—which I feel we do have on a personal basis—cannot be the basis on which an established relationship must rest; not friendship alone. I recall that a professor of law when I was a first-year student said that a contract was only as good as the will of the parties concerned to keep it."

Chou sat motionless, his face intent but impassive.

"I believe the interests of China as well as the interests of the United States urgently require that we maintain our military establishment at approximately its present levels," I said. "And, with certain exceptions which we can discuss later, I believe that we should maintain a military presence in Europe, in Japan, and also maintain our naval forces in the Pacific. I believe that the interests of China are just as great as those of the United States on that point."

As I had intended, this statement created a slight stir on the Chinese side of the table.

"Let me now make what I trust will not be taken as an invidious comparison," I continued. "By religion I am a Quaker, although not a very good one, and I believe in peace. All of my instincts are against a big military establishment and also against military adventures. As I indicated a moment ago, the Prime Minister is one of the world's leading spokesmen for his philosophy, and so he has to be opposed to powers such as the United States maintaining huge military establishments. But each of us has to put the survival of his nation first, and if the United States were to reduce its military strength, and if we were to withdraw from the areas of the world which I have mentioned, the dangers to the United States would be great—and the dangers to China would be even greater.

"I do not impute any motives to the present leaders of the Soviet Union," I said. "I have to respect what they say. But I must make policy on the basis of what they do. And in terms of the nuclear power balance, the Soviet Union has been moving ahead at a very alarming rate over the past four years. I have determined that the United States must not fall behind. If we did, our shield of protection for Europe, and for the nations of the Pacific with which we have treaties, would be worthless."

Applying this approach to the question of America's relationship with Japan, I said that the Chinese had framed their position on the subject in terms of their ideology and philosophy: they called for the withdrawal of American troops from Japan and the abrogation of our treaty of mutual defense, thus leaving Japan neutral and unarmed.

"I think that the Prime Minister, in terms of his philosophy, has taken exactly the correct position with respect to Japan," I said, "and I think that he has to continue to take it. But I want him to understand why I think strongly that our policy with respect to Japan is in the security interests of his country even though it is opposed to the philosophic doctrine which he espouses.

"The United States can get out of Japanese waters, but others will still fish there. If we were to leave Japan naked and defenseless, they would have to turn to others for help or build the capability to defend themselves. If we had no defense arrangement with Japan, we would have no influence where they were concerned.

"If the United States is gone from Asia, gone from Japan," I said, "our protests, no matter how loud, would be like firing an empty cannon. We would have no effect, because thousands of miles away is just too far to be heard.

"Now I realize that I have painted here a picture which makes me sound like an old cold warrior," I continued, and Chou laughed softly. "But it is the world as I see it, and when I analyze it, it is what brings us, China and America, together, not in terms of philosophy and not in terms of friendship—although I believe that is important—but because of national security I believe our interests are in common in the respects I have mentioned."

The Chinese regarded the Soviet Union with a mixture of utter contempt and healthy fear. Chou was completely aware of the symbolism and impact of my coming to Peking before going to Moscow, and he thoroughly enjoyed the fulminations of the Soviet press against my visit. "You have come here first," he said, "and Moscow is carrying on like..."
beck, and she asked me why another of her favorite authors, Jack London, had committed suicide. I couldn't remember, but I told her that I thought it was alcoholism. She asked about Walter Lippmann and said that she had read some of his articles.

Chiang Ching had none of the easy humor or warmth of Mao, Chou, and the other men I met. I had observed the same characteristic in the young women who acted as interpreters and in several others we met during our week in China. The women of the movement, it struck me, were more humorless and more single-minded in their total dedication to the ideology than were the men. In fact, Chiang Ching was unpleasantly abrasive and aggressive. At one point that evening she turned to me and in a challenging voice asked, "Why did you not come to China before now?" Since the ballet was in progress at the time, I did not respond.

I had not been particularly looking forward to this ballet, but after a few minutes I was impressed by its dazzling technical and theatrical virtuosity. Chiang Ching had been undeniably successful in her attempt to create a consciously propagandistic theatre piece that would both entertain and inspire its audience. The result was a hybrid combining elements of opera, operetta, musical comedy, classical ballet, modern dance, and gymnastics.

The story deals with a young Chinese woman in prerevolutionary times who leads her townspeople in a revolt against an oppressive landlord. Emotionally and dramatically the production was superficial and artificial. In many respects, as I noted in my diary, it reminded me of the ballet Spartacus that we had seen in Leningrad in 1959—in which the ending was changed so that the slaves won.

After each evening's social event Kissinger would meet with the Vice Foreign Minister and go over each new draft of the official communiqué word by word. Sometimes Chou would join them; sometimes Kissinger would walk across the small bridge connecting the two guesthouses and report to me on the progress they were making or the problems they had run up against. As a result of these nocturnal negotiations, few of us got very much sleep, and Kissinger got hardly any.

Taiwan was the touchstone for both sides. We felt that we should not and could not abandon the Taiwanese; we were committed to Taiwan's right to exist as an independent nation. The Chinese were equally determined to use the communiqué to assert their unequivocal claim to the island. This was the kind of disagreement that our formula for drafting the communiqué was supposed to take into account: we could state our position and they could state theirs. In this case, domestic political considerations led Kissinger and me to try to convince the Chinese of the necessity of exercising moderation.

We knew that if the Chinese made a strongly belligerent claim to Taiwan in the communiqué, I would come under murderous cross fire from any or all the various pro-Taiwan, anti-Nixon, and anti-P.R.C. lobbies and interest groups at home. If these groups found common ground on the eve of the presidential elections, the entire China initiative might be turned into a partisan issue. Then, if I lost the election, whether because of this particular factor or not, my successor might not be able to continue developing the relationship between Washington and Peking. In the official plenary sessions with Chou, therefore, I spoke very frankly about the practical political problems a strongly worded communiqué on Taiwan would cause me.

We knew that no agreement concerning Taiwan could be reached at this time. While both sides could agree that Taiwan was a part of China—a position supported by both the Peking and Taiwan governments—we would have to oppose the use of military force by Peking to bring Taiwan under Communist rule.

Our lengthy discussions resulted as we expected: we could only agree to disagree and to reflect our differences in the communiqué. Thanks largely to Kissinger's negotiating skill and Chou's common sense, the Chinese finally agreed to sufficiently modified language.

One reason we found the Chinese appeared to be so agreeable to deal with was their total lack of conceit or arrogance. Unlike the Soviets, who ritually insisted that everything they had was the biggest and the best, the Chinese were almost obsessed with self-criticism and with seeking advice on how to improve themselves. Even Chiang Ching, when I told her how impressed I was with her ballet, said, "It is good to know that you find it acceptable, but tell me how you would go about improving it." As Chou continually referred to their need to understand and overcome their imperfections, I could not help thinking of Khrushchev's boastful bombast and how much healthier the Chinese approach was. Of course, I knew that it was only an approach, a conscious decision to view themselves in this way, and that in fact they were absolutely convinced of the ultimate superiority of their culture and philosophy, and that in time it would triumph over ours and everyone else's.

However, I found myself liking these austere and dedicated men. When Pat and I toured the Forbidden City, our host was the seventy-two-year-old Minister of Defense, Marshal Yeh Chien-ying.

Diary

He was a totally delightful man with great inner strength. He made the interesting comment that the American music and the Chinese music seemed to fit in together, and that American and Chinese journalists hit it off well. I think he is totally correct in
this respect, particularly where Americans have a little depth and subtlety and are not the abrasive, loud types that would grate upon the Chinese. One of the benefits of our relationship is that Americans today, as distinguished from the late nineteenth-century Americans, are very different from the Europeans, the British, French, Dutch, et al. We have no sense of arrogance—we honestly, almost naïvely, like people and want to get along with them. We lack often a sense of subtlety but that will come after we’ve had a few hundred more years of civilization. It is the subtlety of the Chinese which is most impressive to me. I had read about it and heard about it, and seen it in quotations. Chou En-lai, of course, adds to Chinese subtlety the far-ranging experience of a world diplomat.

On our third night in Peking, Pat and I were taken to a gymnastics and table tennis exhibition.

Diary

The gymnastic event was a colorful spectacle and, as was the case with the ballet the night before, had the feeling of enormous dedication and singleness of purpose in the whole production.

The way that they brought out their equipment, and the opening march with the red flag, was strikingly strong. The appearance of both the girls and men, as well as, of course, up to the superb Ping-Pong event left an impression that was not only lasting, but also foreboding.

Henry could not be more right in his warning that as the years went on, not only we but all the people of the world will have to make our very best effort if we are to match the enormous ability, drive, and discipline of the Chinese people.

When I went to bed that night I found that I could not get to sleep. At five o’clock I got up and took a hot bath. I climbed back into bed and lighted one of the Chinese-made “Great Wall” cigars my hosts had thoughtfully provided, and sat puffing on the cigar and making notes about the events of the momentous week.

On Saturday, February 26, we flew with Chou in his plane to Hangchow, in eastern China. By this time he and I were talking quite freely to each other.

Diary

Chou En-lai and I had a very interesting conversation on the way to the airport in Peking. He spoke of Mao’s poem which he wrote on returning to his hometown after thirty-two years. He returned to the point he has made quite often, that adversity is a great teacher. I related it to adversity generally, and pointed out that an election loss was really more painful than a physical wound in war. The latter wounds the body—the other wounds the spirit. On the other hand, the election loss helps to develop the strength and character which are essential for future battles. I said to Chou that I found that I had learned more from defeats than from victories, and that all I wanted was a life in which I had just one more victory than defeat.

I used also the example of de Gaulle in the wilderness for a period of years as a factor which helped to build his character. He came back with a thought that men who travel on a smooth road all their life do not develop strength.

Chou said that I had a poetic turn of mind like Mao, when I had in my last toast said that it was not possible to build a bridge across 16,000 miles and twenty-two years in one week. Much of the Mao poetry, of course, is simply a colorful and vivid example.

He referred again to his admiration for Six Crises, and I jokingly said that he shouldn’t believe all the bad that the press said of me, and that I would follow the same practice with regard to him.

Hangchow is built around large lakes and gardens. In the days when the emperors used it as a summer resort, it was known as the most beautiful city in China. I knew that Mao enjoyed taking vacations there and staying in an exquisite old palace that had been turned into a government guesthouse.

Even though we were in Hangchow in the cloudy off-season, it was easy to see why Mao was drawn to the city. Mountains rise mistily in the background, and the lakes are full of lotus flowers. The pagoda-like guesthouse, with its sloping green tile roofs, was set in the middle of a lake on an island called “Island of Three Towers Reflecting the Moon.” It was rather musty, but it was immaculately clean, and Pat and I later agreed that our stay there was the most delightful interlude of the trip.

During the more than fifteen hours of formal talks I had with Chou we covered a wide range of issues and ideas. Since all our discussions during this trip were so frank, it was understandable that the Chinese were nervous about the possibility of leaks. I am sure that Chou had no trouble imagining the propaganda use the Kremlin would have for the transcripts of our talks. During a discussion of the internal opposition to some of my decisions during the Indo-Pakistan war, Chou referred to
the Jack Anderson leak. "The records of three of your meetings were made public because all sorts of people were invited," he remarked with a sardonic smile. I felt a real concern beneath his bantering tone. In fact, in our first conversation on the way in to Peking from the airport, Chou had mentioned how important the Chinese considered confidentiality in our relationship, and Chairman Mao had made the same point very emphatically during our meeting.

To assuage Chou's fears, I outlined the strict procedures we planned to follow to keep our future contacts secret. "The Prime Minister may think we're being too careful," I said, "but as you know, we had the Pentagon Papers from the previous administration, and we've had the Anderson papers from this administration. Dr. Kissinger and I have determined that this will never happen in the new relationship that we have established with your government."

I said I was determined that when the fate of our two countries—and possibly the fate of the world—was involved, we would be able to talk in confidence.

When we began to talk about the situation in the Middle East, Chou jokingly said, "Even Dr. Kissinger doesn't want to discuss this problem, because being Jewish he is afraid that they suspect him."

I said, "My concern in the Middle East—and, incidentally it is Dr. Kissinger's too, because while he is Jewish he is an American first—our concern is much bigger than Israel. We believe the Soviet Union is moving to reach its hands out in that area. It must be resisted. That is why we took a position in the Jordanian crisis, for example, warning the Soviets that if they move aggressively in that area, we will consider our own interests involved."

I emphasized that my visit had bipartisan support and that other visits by Democrats as well as Republicans would now be perfectly in order. "As I have indicated to the Prime Minister, it is important to have policy carried forward whoever sits in this chair next year," I said. "Under our system, I may be here next year, and I may not. I want to be sure that whether a Democrat or Republican occupies the presidency, this beginning we have made is carried forward. It is bigger than any one party or anyone man. It involves the future for years to come."

As we became more at ease and more familiar with each other, our conversations occasionally became light, even humorous.

During one of our airport drives, Chou told me about a meeting between Chairman Mao and Emperor Haile Selassie a few months before my trip to China was announced. Mao had asked the old Emperor whether he thought that the "socialist devil," as he humorously called himself, should sit down and talk with the "capitalist devil." I said, "I expect that many of your colleagues must have thought the reason I didn't bring a hat with me was because I couldn't find one to fit over my horns."

A recurring theme in our conversations was age. As Malraux had said, the Chinese leaders were obsessed by the amount that remained to be done and by the little time that was left in which to do it.

Diary

Chou came to the age factor two or three times. I said that I was enormously impressed by his vitality and that age really was a question of not how many years a person lived but how much he lived in those years. I seemed to sense that he felt that being involved in great affairs kept a person alive and young, but there was a haunting refrain throughout that he felt that the current leadership was near the end of the road with still very much to be done.

All the Chinese leaders we met seemed particularly struck by the youth of our entire party. In our first meeting Chou singled out Dwight Chapin, who was only thirty-one and looked even younger. "We have too many elderly people in our leadership. So on this point we should learn from you," he said. "I have found that you have many young men; Mr. Chapin is very young indeed, and Mr. Green is not very old either." Marshall Green, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, was fifty-six.

Despite the fact that I was almost a quarter of a century younger than Mao, I approached this trip as if it were the last chance I would have to do something about the Sino-American relationship. As I put it in a diary dictation shortly after returning home, "I am really probably older than they are—I have only ten months to live (politically)—or at most four years and ten months, and I must get results now. That is why now is the hour for me, even more than for them, despite the fact that they are older in conventional terms."

One afternoon as we were discussing the need for patience in the solution of problems, Chou said, "I can't wait ten years. You have ten years. Mr. President may be re-elected to a third term."

"That's against the Constitution," Kissinger interjected.

"After four years then you can run again, because your age permits you to do that. But in view of the age of the present leaders of China, it is not possible. They're too old," Chou said.

"Mr. Prime Minister," I replied, "former Presidents of the United States are like British kings; they have great responsibility but no power. I mean one who is out of office."
"But your career is quite rare in history. You have been Vice President for two terms, then lost and then won an election again. It's quite rare in history."

Our joint statement, issued from Shanghai at the end of the trip, has become known as the Shanghai Communique.

Following the formula Kissinger had worked out during Polio II, the communique broke diplomatic ground by stating frankly the significant differences between the two sides on major issues rather than smoothing them over. Thus the text is surprisingly lively for a diplomatic document.

The first substantive section begins: "The U.S. side stated" and then details our positions on each of the major issues discussed. This is followed by a section that begins: "The Chinese side stated" and then covers the same ground in counterpoint.

Thus the U.S. side proclaimed its support for the eight-point peace plan proposed by us and the South Vietnamese in Paris on January 27; the Chinese side stated its support for the seven-point proposal put forward by the Vietcong in February.

We stated our intention to maintain close ties with and support for South Korea; the Chinese endorsed North Korea's plan for unification of the Korean peninsula, and called for the abolition of the UN presence in South Korea.

We affirmed that we placed the highest value on our friendly relations with Japan and said that we would continue to develop the existing close bonds; the Chinese side stated that it "firmly opposes the revival and outward expansion of Japanese militarism and firmly supports the Japanese people's desire to build an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral Japan."

The Chinese stated their claim to be the sole legal government of China and their conviction that Taiwan is a province of China. They affirmed that the liberation of Taiwan was China's internal affair in which no country had a right to interfere, and demanded that all American forces and military installations be withdrawn from Taiwan. They concluded by stating that "the Chinese government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of 'one China, one Taiwan,' 'one China, two governments,' 'two Chinas,' and 'independent Taiwan' or advocate that 'the status of Taiwan remains to be determined.'"

The wording of the American section on Taiwan avoided a clash by stating simply: "The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves." We stated our ultimate objective of withdrawing American troops from Taiwan but did not put any final date on it, and we agreed in the meantime to reduce our forces and installations on Taiwan progressively "as the tension in the area diminishes."

Perhaps the most vitally important section of the Shanghai Communique was the provision that neither nation "should seek hegemony in the Asia Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony." By agreeing to this provision both the P.R.C. and the United States were imposing restraints on themselves. But far more important, particularly as far as the Chinese were concerned, was that the provision subtly but unmistakably made it clear that we both would oppose efforts by the U.S.S.R. or any other major power to dominate Asia.

As I look back on that week in China two impressions stand out most vividly. One is the awesome sight of the disciplined but wildly—almost fanatically—enthusiastic audience at the gymnastic exhibition in Peking, confirming my belief that we must cultivate China during the next few decades while it is still learning to develop its national strength and potential. Otherwise we will one day be confronted with the most formidable enemy that has ever existed in the history of the world.

My other most vivid memory of the trip is the unique personality of Chou En-lai. My meeting with Mao Tse-tung was too brief and too formal to have given me much more than a superficial personal impression. But many hours of formal talks and social conversation with Chou made me appreciate his brilliance and dynamism.

Unlike many world leaders and statesmen who are completely absorbed in one particular cause or issue, Chou En-lai was able to talk in broad terms about men and history. Even though his perspective was badly distorted by his rigid ideological frame of reference the extent of his knowledge was impressive.

After one of the banquets in Peking, I made notes of our conversation.

Diary

It was interesting to note the remarkable knowledge of history that Chou En-lai displays, and, also, how his historical perspective is shaped by his ideology. For example, he sees the French intervention in the Revolutionary War as being by volunteers [led by Lafayette] and not by the French government.

Chou also sees Lincoln [as one] who "after many defeats,” as he put it, finally prevailed because he had the people on his side. While it is true that Lincoln is one of the few great figures in history, he was a total pragmatist. He did not fight the war for the purpose of freeing the slaves, although he was unalterably op-
posed to slavery; and when he freed the slaves, he did not free them as an end in itself—he did so as a purely tactical, military maneuver, freeing only the slaves in the South but not in the Northern border states.

I regret that Chou did not live long enough for me to meet him again when I visited China for the second time in February 1976. I feel that although our acquaintance was brief and necessarily somewhat restrained and even wary, we had formed bonds of mutual respect and personal esteem.

During our last long session together in the guesthouse in Peking, Chou said, “In your dining room upstairs we have a poem by Chairman Mao in his calligraphy about Lushan mountain. The last sentence reads, ‘The beauty lies at the top of the mountain.’ You have risked something to come to China. But there is another Chinese poem which reads, ‘On perilous peaks dwells beauty in its infinite variety.’”

“We are at the top of the mountain now,” I said.

“That’s one poem,” he continued. “Another one which I would have liked to have put up, but I couldn’t find an appropriate place, is ‘Ode to a Plum Blossom.’ In that poem the Chairman meant that one who makes an initiative may not always be one who stretches out his or her hand. By the time the blossoms are full-blown, that is the time they are about to disappear.” He took a small book from his pocket and read the poem.

“Spring disappears with rain and winds
and comes with flying snow.
Ice hangs on a thousand feet of cliff
yet at the tip of the topmost branch the plum blooms.
The plum is not a delicious girl showing off
yet she heralds spring.
When mountain flowers are in wild bloom
she giggles in all the color.”

“Therefore,” Chou continued, “we believe we are in accord with the idea you have expressed: you are the one who made the initiative. You may not be there to see its success, but of course we would welcome your return,” he said.

Kissinger diplomatically pointed out that even if I won re-election, a return visit would not be very likely.

“I was only trying to illustrate the Chinese way of thinking,” Chou said. “It does not matter anyhow.”

Chou referred to the fact that I had changed the name of Air Force

One to The Spirit of ’76 shortly before this trip. “Regardless of who is the next President,” he said, “the spirit of seventy-six still exists and will prevail. From the standpoint of policies, I hope that our counterpart will be the same so that we can continue our efforts. We also hope not only that the President continues in office but that your National Security Adviser and your assistants continue in office. Various changes may be bound to come. For example, if I should suddenly die of a heart attack, you would also have to deal with a different counterpart. Therefore, we have tried to bring more people to meet you. I hope you won’t complain that I am too lengthy in my words.”

I assured him that, on the contrary, I was very interested in what he was saying.

“This belongs to the philosophic field, but also to the political point of view. For example,” he said, pointing to the book of poems open in his lap, “this poem was written after a military victory over the enemy. In the whole poem there is not one word about the enemy; it was very difficult to write the poem.”

“Of course, I believe it is very useful to think in philosophic terms,” I said. “Too often we look at problems of the world from the point of view of tactics. We take the short view. If the one who wrote that poem took the short view, you would not be here today. It is essential to look at the world not just in terms of immediate diplomatic battles and decisions but the great forces that move the world. Maybe we have some disagreements, but we know there will be changes, and we know that there can be a better, and I trust safer, world for our two peoples regardless of differences if we can find common ground.”

I described the real nature of my thinking behind the China initiative in notes I made at 2:30 A.M. on Friday, February 24, of points I planned to make in my meeting with Chou that afternoon. Perhaps if I could have publicized these notes the conservative critics of the China initiative would at least have felt reassured that I had not approached the Chinese naively.

The first was to emphasize the immense potential of the Chinese living overseas, and the need for the P.R.C. to use that potential and learn to live with it, rather than to blunt it by trying to drive them into the system.

The second was to emphasize that RN would turn like a cobra on the Russians, or for that matter on anyone else, if they break their word with him. My record in Vietnam helped in getting this point across.

The third was to emphasize, in a very personal and direct way, my intense belief in our system and my belief that in peaceful competition it would prevail. I think we have gotten that across. I believe that it is essential not to let the assumption exist at all on their part that their system will eventually prevail because of its superiority.
Related to this point is that we are not going to become weak—that our system is not coming apart at the seams—and that all of the public criticism, etc., of our system should not be taken as a sign of weakness.

In my toast at the banquet on our last night in China I said, “The joint communique which we have issued today summarizes the results of our talks. That communique will make headlines around the world tomorrow. But what we have said in that communique is not nearly as important as what we will do in the years ahead to build a bridge across 16,000 miles and twenty-two years of hostility which have divided us in the past.”

I raised my glass and said, “We have been here a week. This was the week that changed the world.”

**ITT**

The day after we returned from China, Jack Anderson began a series of newspaper columns in which he claimed to have unearthed a major administration scandal. His charges were based on a memorandum allegedly from Dita Beard, a lobbyist for International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, to one of her ITT superiors. Anderson said that the memo implied that a government anti-trust settlement with ITT had been influenced by an ITT contribution toward the upcoming Republican convention and that John Mitchell and I had pushed for favorable treatment for ITT because of this contribution. Mrs. Beard supposedly managed this whole deal almost single-handedly.

In fact, the anti-trust settlement in question had been a favorable one for the government and not for ITT, which was required to divest itself of holdings representing $1 billion in sales. On the first trading day after this settlement ITT’s stock fell 11 percent. Furthermore, the money that allegedly influenced the settlement was not a contribution to the Committee to Re-elect the President or to any contributions toward the selection of the Republican convention site—the Justice officials prosecuting the case decided to settle it and not proceed with the appeal. Months later both Watergate Special Prosecutors, Archibald Cox and Leon Jaworski, investigated the ITT case and concluded that there had been no quid pro quo involved in the settlement. When the tapes of my conversations with Mitchell and Kleindienst were turned over, they proved that my motive in ordering that no appeal be filed was policy and not politics. But this vindication was more than a year away. In that pre-election spring of 1972, the Democrats played the ITT issue to the hilt. And by the way we reacted we played right into their hands.

Dick Kleindienst, who at the time of the Anderson columns had been