

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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Feb 2  
1963

Mr. President:

Herewith, as requested via Marvin  
Watson, Al Jenkins good notes on the  
meeting with the China experts on  
Friday.

W.R.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 4, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: China Experts Meeting with the President, February 2, 1968  
(Sponsored by the National Committee on United States-  
China Relations)

PARTICIPANTS: The President, Professors Edwin O. Reischauer, Harvard, Robert A. Scalapino, Univ. of California, Alexander Eckstein, Univ. of Michigan, Lucian W. Pye, MIT, A. Doak Barnett, Columbia, and George Taylor, Univ. of Washington; Messrs. Carl F. Stover, National Institute of Public Affairs, Cecil Thomas, Executive Director of the National Committee, Walt Rostow and Alfred Jenkins

Mr. Rostow said that the visiting China specialists had examined three subjects for discussion with the President: (1) the situation in China; (2) alternative future directions of the evolving situation; and (3) policy considerations for the United States. They expected to concentrate on the last of these.

The President welcomed the participants, saying that he valued the opportunity to hear their recommendations on policy alternatives concerning China. He said that we had been following two channels in our China policy: bridge-building on the one hand, and necessary deterrents on the other. The President invited comment from the participants in turn around the table.

Ambassador Reischauer said that he was especially heartened by the President's reference to China in his July 12, 1966 speech. He felt that this time of disorder in China might be a good time to show our flexibility. In doing so, we would look beyond present crises. We should lay out our reconciliation approach now.

The President observed that we do not, in fact, hold to a rigid course of action. We are keeping our options open.

Professor Eckstein said he thought it encouraging that we had offered an exchange of agricultural expertise, of seeds, etc., and that in recent times we had broadened considerably our efforts at contact.

He thought we should go further and relax our embargo against Chinese goods. This would not be of much economic importance, but would have political value in indicating more flexibility. He thought it would entail no serious risks concerning China's war-making potential.

Mr. Thomas said that he was not a China specialist, but he would like to direct to the President's attention what he thought to be public concern about China. Recently, under National Committee on U.S. -China Relations sponsorship, a Norwegian journalist, Mr. Munthe-Kaas, had spoken in 22 cities throughout the country. Without exception, audiences were anxious to hear and talk about China. The predominant opinion seemed to be in favor of a more flexible approach to that country, including trade.

The President observed that we have to keep hammering away at this. He said that he would like to get a "Presidential commission" to keep at it. East-West trade was only one thing the public was interested in, however. It was also interested in Vietnam. That is the great cost of Vietnam -- because of it we do not get the chance to do some of the other things which would be desirable.

Professor Pye said that we must look beyond Vietnam to China, the really big problem. The reporters may be provocative, but we must not let that affect our perspective. We should approach China at the big-problem level. We should discuss with China such issues as non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, disarmament, etc. There should be a dialogue on that sort of thing at Warsaw. We should try to get China to see the nature of the world to come. It is true that we cannot negotiate with China today, but we should engage in this kind of discussion just as we did with the Soviets.

Professor Barnett said that the group held differing views as to the need for considering initiatives just at this time. China is going through a period of great change and is very disrupted. Even now, however, he himself felt we should look beyond Vietnam. He, too, liked the flavor of the President's July 1966 speech. We should even now be working out the steps implied in that speech. He agreed with Professor Eckstein that we should keep going beyond consideration of Vietnam. We should remove trade restrictions except for the basic COCOM list. We should get China into the international community. We should work actively toward achieving dual Chinese representation in the United Nations. Professor Barnett said he was impressed by the value of an advisor like Bohlen on the Soviet Union. He felt that we needed a man of similar seniority to advise on China.

The President asked the group to submit nominations. He said he needed at his elbow an advisor on the Soviet Union, and he had had both Thompson and Bohlen in that role. He needed the same for China. There has been a failure to communicate with the Chinese. The President said he had asked Gronouski to go to Warsaw to carry on the talks because he thought he had the qualifications which would make it possible to communicate. Unfortunately, however, the Chinese have continued to insist that they are interested in discussing nothing except Taiwan. The President said he had tried hard to bring about communication but he had failed. He said that he was, of course, ultimately responsible for such a failure, just as President Kennedy took the responsibility for failure in the Bay of Pigs. We have made a truly major effort to communicate and to keep our policy flexible. We are not hidebound. Since there has been no response to our efforts, we must be doing something wrong.

Professor Barnett maintained that we had not failed, because as long as Mao was there we simply could not expect any response. He thought it important, however, to keep making attempts.

The President thought perhaps we were not searching enough. Competent men were needed to put on assignments of this kind. Also needed just now were a dozen men for ambassadorships and for some other posts throughout the government. Actually, we need Reischauer in a dozen places.

Professor Eckstein said we need people, for instance, at the deputy assistant secretary level, who know a great deal about China. As for China, there is more hope of change than there has been for a long time. There is transition to something quite dissimilar -- perhaps in time to be compared to the changes in the Soviet Union. The dialogue which is possible now may be minimal, but our policy of reconciliation should go right along (sic). It is very important that we focus a great deal of attention on China because that situation could get quite messy, and later China may contain a third of the population of the world. We should get China into the United Nations. Public discussion is one way to get around present pressures. The Charter should be revised. Professor Eckstein further expressed the belief that every country calling itself a state should accept the responsibility of a state and should automatically be in the United Nations. That would mean North Korea, North and South Vietnam and all other entities acting as countries. If such a position were taken, it might even lead to the acceptance by both Peking and Taiwan of the presence of the other in the UN. He said that he detected a changing mood in the country; in the business

community, in labor circles, in civic groups and in churches. He said the Committee represented by this group constituted an answer to the rigidities represented in the Committee of One Million. The time has come to engage in more open discussions.

The President said we were going through a dangerous period in this respect. It is hard to wage a major war against one communist group without having the public oppose all communists. It is amazing, however, that we can go through the Vietnam experience and not have more clamor against the Soviet Union. The President said he thought Professor Eckstein was right in his evaluation of the openmindedness found among various groups in the country. This is surprising when we look at the contributions of the McCarthy period. We would expect emotions now to be even higher in view of the Pueblo capture, and talk of cutting off the head of President Park and of killing the American Ambassador. Perhaps people are too busy wanting to stop the bombing to think of these things. We must carry on an endurance contest in Vietnam in such a way as not to lead to inflexibility on other issues.

Professor Scalapino cautioned that in the case of China we are dealing with exceedingly complex issues. If we are to count on moderation in the American people's viewpoint, we will have to keep reiterating that these questions are indeed complex and not subject to simple formulae for resolution. The American people today can grasp a high level of complexities if they are led to do so. They can, for instance, understand the import of so-called "people's wars" if they are explained. The real problem is that so long as the Maoists are in control they will try to cause trouble such as in Burma, other parts of Asia (the President interjected "and the Dominican Republic").


The President said he fully agreed that the American people were ready to understand complexities and that complex issues did not have to be put in simple terms which might be misleading.

In concluding, the President said that, firstly, he very much appreciated the fact that the group had come to talk with him. Secondly, he had profited from the discussion and, thirdly, he wanted to ask of the group two things:

-- that two or three members of the group write for him a directive as though addressed to the Secretary of State, asking him to take steps "A through F" -- things which ought to be done concerning China;

-- recommend someone who could serve as a counterpart to Bohlen.

The President also said that he would welcome hearing from any member of the group at any time on suggestions concerning the Warsaw talks, or any other suggestions concerning China. The President then briefly reviewed recent events leading up to an atmosphere of crisis, which built up all through January. In closing, the President invited the professors to "play President" in preparing for him the memo, and also to write him their full thoughts in letters within the next six weeks or so.

  
Alfred Jenkins

Distribution

The President  
Mr. Rostow  
Mr. Roche  
Mr. Jordan