

Book Tells Mao Vietnam View

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Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung was determined to avoid involvement in the Vietnam war because he was primarily focused on China's domestic problems in the mid-1960s.

This disclosure is based on an interview given in early 1965 by Mao to the late Edgar Snow, the American writer who died in February. The full text of the interview is contained in "The Long Revolution", a posthumous volume of Snow's reports scheduled for publication this week.

The book also contains 1970 interviews with Mao and Premier Chou En-lai in which the Chinese leaders explained to Snow the motives underlying their decision to invite President Nixon to China. A part of the Mao interview, published in Life magazine in April, 1971 was an important signal in the covert Sino-American dialogue that preceded Mr. Nixon's trip.

Mao's desire to avoid intervention in Vietnam contrasts

sharply with assertions by senior American officials during the 1960s that the U.S. objective in Southeast Asia was to stop Chinese expansion. In October 1967, for example, Secretary of State Dean Rusk called the U.S. stand in Vietnam a block against future aggression by "a billion Chinese . . . armed with nuclear weapons".

Speaking to Snow in January 1965, however, Mao emphasized that China's armies would "go beyond her borders to fight . . . only if the United States attacked China". Snow further cites Mao as saying that the Chinese "were very busy with their internal affairs".

According to Snow, Mao said that "China supported revolutionary movements, but not by invading countries". Whenever a "liberation struggle" arose, Mao said, China "would publish statements and call demonstrations to support it" and it was "precisely that which vexed the imperialists".

Mao's thesis was spelled out in September 1965 by Marshal Lin Biao, the former defense minister. He stated that "revolution or people's war in any country is the business of the masses in that country and should be carried out primarily by their own efforts".

Snow reveals that Mao's policy of non-intervention was challenged by China's former chief of state Liu Shao-chi, who favored a settlement of Peking's dispute with the Soviet Union in order to gain the protection of the Kremlin in the event of a clash with the United States.

But, according to Snow, Mao "resolutely refused to be drawn into a position of dependence" on Moscow, as he had been in the Korean War. Such a position, Mao felt, might lead to a "possible double cross" by the Russians.

Snow disclosure of Mao's attitude has been substantiated by evidence from other sources indicating that Gen.

Lo Jui-ching, then chief of staff of the Chinese armed forces, favored intervention by China in the Vietnam war.

These sources have pointed out that the Chinese Communist Party leaders were seeking at the time to engage the army in a foreign venture in order to prevent Mao from using it in the Cultural Revolution, his campaign to purge his domestic political adversaries.

Mao, using the army as his main support, eventually succeeded in ousting Liu Shao-chi and the other Party leaders. The question of intervention in Vietnam, however, played only a minor part in the Cultural Revolution.

Delineating the events that led to President Nixon's China visit, Snow reports that Chou En-lai told him that the Chinese had agreed sometime in 1969 that Mr. Nixon or his emissary could come to Peking to discuss the issue of Taiwan, the island redoubt occupied by Chiang Kai-shek's rival Nationalist regime.

Snow writes, however, that there was no immediate response from the White House. Then came the U.S. incursion into Cambodia in the spring of 1970 and, according to Snow, "the Chinese concluded that Nixon was not to be taken seriously".

But in late 1970, Snow reveals, Pakistan President Yahya Khan arrived in Peking carrying a personal letter to Chou from Mr. Nixon. The letter "formally raised" the question of a visit by the President to China. It also suggested that Mr. Nixon be preceded by an emissary, White House foreign affairs adviser Henry Kissinger, who was authorized to discuss the Taiwan question.

Snow quotes one of Chou's aides as saying that the Chinese looked forward to "crossing verbal swords with such a worthy adversary" as Kissinger. The aide said: "There is a man who knows the language of both worlds—

his own and ours. He is the first American we have seen in his position. With him it should be possible to talk."

In his interview with Mao, Snow reports, the Chinese leader said that he "preferred men like Nixon to Social Democrats and revisionists, those who professed to be one thing but in power behaved quite otherwise."

Mao went on to say, according to Snow, that "Nixon might be deceitful . . . but perhaps a little bit less than some others. Nixon resorted to tough tactics but he also used some soft tactics. Yes, Nixon could just get on a plane and come."

Snow discloses that he had asked Mao in 1965 if he might deliver a message to President Johnson. But Mao's answer at that time was "Pu-shi (No) and nothing more".

What changed Mao's mind about inviting an American President, according to Snow, was his perception that the United States was withdrawing from Vietnam. "Once the decision was taken to get out of Vietnam," Snow writes, "clearly a U.S. understanding with China became imperative."

Snow's view, apparently based on his talk with Mao, held that a Sino-American reconciliation could be achieved if two conditions were met.

First, the United States and China should jointly agree to "settle all disputes between them, including the Taiwan dispute, by peaceful negotiation." Second, the United States should recognize Taiwan as "an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China and agree to withdraw its armed forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait".

President Nixon came close to meeting these conditions in the final communique he signed with the Chinese at the end of his China visit last February. Snow was scheduled to cover the President's trip for Life, but he died of cancer during that week.