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Merry-Go-Round

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Chinese Wondering About U.S. Envoy



Jack Anderson

A CONFIDENTIAL senate memorandum, citing a source inside the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), reports that the Red Chinese are "wondering about American Ambassador Arthur Watson.

He is the International Business Machine's heir and big Republican contributor whom President Nixon has put in charge of exploring diplomatic relations with the Chinese in Paris. We reported that he had become gloriously drunk on at least two transatlantic flights.

Drunken conduct offends the Chinese and could jeopardize the Chinese-American negotiations in Paris.

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THE CONFIDENTIAL memo, written by Senate aide Tom Dine to Senator Frank Church, (Dem-Idaho), declares: "From people who know Watson at IBM and those who have dealt with him in France, no one says he can handle the important, sensitive and delicate job that the President has now placed in his less than steady hands."

Dine urges the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to phone foreign policy adviser Henry Kissinger and urge him to encourage the President to "bring Watson home swiftly and send a very top man in his place."

Explains the Senate aide: "A CIA source in contact with the Chinese delegation at the United Nations and with others who are in contact with the Chinese in Paris, talked with me about the charges

that Jack Anderson has made against Ambassador Watson.

"This source believes the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or you personally ought to do something swiftly and effectively to have Watson relieved from his position. The charges are correct; more important, the Chinese are wondering what this all means.

"Several Chinese diplomats have approached our people in New York and in Paris wanting to know what Watson's behavior means. If Watson is not very smart, if he is a drunkard, and if he is licentious, too, then are the Chinese being used in the negotiations in Paris? . . .

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INSTEAD of removing Watson from the delicate negotiations, however, the Nixon Administration has decided to cover up his inadequacies. CIA director Richard Helms wrote a hasty, private letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, insisting "We can find no information in this agency" to support Dine's claims.

"In fact," added Helms, "there has been no report of any PRC (Chinese Communist) reaction to the publicity on Ambassador Watson's conduct."

Watson himself wrote letters of apology for his "rude" conduct on the Pan Am flight to Washington. Finally, Secretary of State Bill Rogers, used his amiable relations on Capitol Hill to persuade both the Senate and House to call off their investigations of Watson.