

28 February 1976

Dear Harold:

Sorry it has taken me so long to get around to writing, but we have been much preoccupied with several things, not least of which was trying to keep track of Nixon's trip. This involved much time-consuming monitoring of junk newscasts in an effort to pick up meaningful clues which we know from experience are unlikely to get into print. Anyway, we've just had trouble trying to keep our heads above water for various reasons. As far as I know your mailings all have come in promptly, and we note your better spirits now that you've been able to get back to writing the new King book.

Incidentally, your 3rd class mailing of Feb. 23 arrived here on the 25th, the same time your first class mailings usually make it in. If the PO is shooting 3rd class mail through via airmail, I see no reason why you shouldn't try sending all your stuff here via 3rd class for a test period, at least. It should save about 60 per cent on postage, I should think. Anyway, it might be worth a try. Your 1st class mailing of the 24th arrived in exactly the same time, two days, on the 26th.

Before I forget it, our subscription to the Washington Post expires March 15 (daily only). We don't intend to renew, partly in an effort to reduce the work load but mostly because it has been arriving so erratically that it's almost more trouble than it's worth. Some issues straggle in up to a month late. Others often are more than a week late, seldom arrive in sequence, and in general cause costly delay and confusion in the processing of clippings. Besides, it seems here that in general the quality of the reporting, particularly of the enterprise factor, has gone down markedly since the strike began and thus far has shown little sign of recovery. At any rate, we plan to try getting along without it.

You are not expected to do anything to make up for this, of course. If you happen to see some item you think we'd like, and which you don't need yourself, you may wish to clip it and send it along, but otherwise forget about us and our needs. We're very appreciative of the protection you've been supplying on the Sunday Post since we dropped that, but we don't ask that or similar protection on the daily material.

An example is the long Post feature from AP on Chappaquiddick. It happens that the Chronicle ran a stripped down version of that feature, so we now have both that and the Post version you sent. I've read neither. When I do, I'll ~~xxxxxx~~ take what is necessary to fill out the Chronicle version and return the Post version to you eventually. So don't worry about getting an extra copy. Perhaps what I'm trying to say is that when something like this comes along, don't go to the bother of sending it or copying it unless we discover a special need for it and ask. You have too much to do to bother with such marginal considerations.

I finally finished a review on PM and have turned it in to Pacific Sun. No indication yet whether or when they'll use it. I'll let you know how it turns out. My eyes bothered me a great deal with PM, and I also had the usual trouble trying to do it justice and still come up with something publishable (from the chicken publisher's standpoint, of course). I still don't feel it's worthy of the book, but at least I've tried. You'll be kept informed.

Nixon starts home from Canton tomorrow. It is clear by this time that, as we figured it from the beginning, that the Chinese have him figured out far more tellingly than most Americans do. By Canton they had crowds surging around him seeking to shake hands, something no Chinese would dream of doing unless he had specific instructions to go against all Chinese instincts about proper and decorous behavior. The common American conclusion that the Chinese do not understand American politics also is 180° off. They understand the meaning not only of such phenomena as the New Hampshire primary but more importantly they understand with utmost clarity the common American delusions about such things.

The important thing about the Nixon trip, thus far, is that it has occurred in 1976 instead of 1977, which was Nixon's own original time for it. The question is why. We believe that the initiative for making it this year came from the Chinese, for use in their own internal political process. When Chou died, or rather when his terminal illness became known generally among the hierarchy, what Mao calls the capitalist roaders naturally began stirring and maneuvering for position. The cultural revolution continues, and basically it is Mao's way of keeping the country on the track toward an egalitarian type of socialism where there will be fewer class distinctions -- and even fewer distinctions between city and rural people -- than would be possible if the society and the economy followed methods used in Russia. Mao regards the Russians as having betrayed socialism with their incentives toward personal gain and advancement, and believes that this course would take China straight back into capitalist areas. Whether he is right or not, this is what he believes, and is behind his emerging attack on Teng Hsiao-p'ing. Mao needed Nixon to symbolize the American connection as an alternative to the Russian route into the future which is symbolized by Teng and before him by Liu Shao-ch'i and Lin Piao. Mao is under no illusions about Nixon, you may be sure. But when Ford refused to give on the Taiwan question, Mao then decided to persuade Nixon to advance his proposed trip to China by a year. Julie and David were sent to feel out the situation and returned with even more cordial invitation than Mao has been extending to Nixon since a month after Nixon resigned. Both men have time constraints, actually. Mao wants to nail down his line and weaken the capitalist roaders as much as possible before he dies, and to do this must present China with a viable alternative to the Russian route. This means disposing of the Russian threat, which can only be done with American assistance, moral if not more than moral. If Ford would not give, then he had to use Nixon as soon as possible after Chou left the scene. Nixon probably ~~wanted to~~ wanted to become the ambassador in Peking (and note how Ford has headed him off there with Thomas Gates) but more likely has his eye on something even grander -- a sort of roving ambassadorship which ~~would~~ as an ex-President he could fill both as a senior statesman like Eisenhower and a trouble-shooting diplomat like David Bruce. The problem is, would Ford be as likely to give him such a position after Ford's present term ends? Even if ~~he~~ elected next fall, Ford might not feel the same obligation to Nixon. No other Republican is likely to, either, with the possible exception of Connally, whom Nixon is supposed to favor over Ford as the GOP nominee. And certainly no Democrat is likely to name Nixon to any post conceivable unless it be dog catcher in Lower Slobbovia.

In other words, if Nixon is going to get an appointment of any kind, it may have to be before Ford's first term ends. After all Ford owes that to Nixon entirely, and if Nixon has any leverage with Ford it has to be exerted before that first term ends. Mao knows this instinctively, which partly may account for his advancing the Nixon visit as he did. But you may be sure that Mao made very certain that the Nixon visit would serve Mao's own interests well.

Kissinger, who quietly visited Nixon on Feb. 2 at San Clemente a few days before Nixon announced he was going to Peking, may be playing a double game here. It seems highly unlikely that he has not known all along what was brewing. What he plans to do no doubt will depend much on public reaction in this country, but he has worked with Nixon before and knows him probably as well as any other American, at least in this foreign affairs area.

At the moment it seems that Americans generally, ^{and} disgusted as well as puzzled by Nixon and his reception in China (I've tried to seal background articles on the Chinese view of Nixon to two different mets, one on the east coast and one out here, but nobody seems interested) ~~we~~ but I think we won't know the full meaning of the trip for some time, and that the American attitude may be susceptible to change. For instance, it looks very much as if the southern part of Africa is about to explode in Rhodesia and Namibia if not in southern Ang~~ola~~^{ola}. What then? In an election year can the Ford administration sit still while Cuban troops and Soviet arms join in with African native insurgents against these symbols of lingering white rule? It's going to be a difficult choice, especially at a time when the capitalist system is in trouble in ALL democratic countries and its output of arms continues unabated and for sale to the highest bidders.

In other words, a couple of months from now the world may look very different, boiling with anti-white and anti-imperialist passions, with other confrontations continuing in the Middle East, and with unstable markets feeding the ~~fire~~ fires of world-wide inflation. Russia and Cuba are not likely to back down in Africa as things stand now. What do we do then?

We either begin Vietnam in Africa all over again, or worse, and return to the prospect of nuclear confrontation. Here is where Nixon, Mao and possibly Kissinger might step forth with a sensible proposal. I'm not saying they will. I'm saying they could, and we know from the China experience that Nixon will do anything, even make a constructive proposal, in order to serve his own ends.


Twenty years ago Cyou En-lai laid down at Bandung the five principles of co-existence from which the Chinese never have varied since. These could be resurrected, along with an appeal for a world-wide -- or at least a tri-partite -- disarmament conference to discuss the elimination and destruction of nuclear weapons -- all of them. This could be done on a preliminary big power level and later extended to include all powers with nuclear capability -- and there are many now who qualify. The thing is that any such proposal would not be a new idea -- Mao has been saying for 25 years that nuclear weapons are useless because no one has the guts to be the first to use them. He has advocated complete outlawing of nuclear weapons from the beginning. He holds that detente and salt talks merely are excuses to keep American and Russian armaments ~~level~~ more or less at current levels -- in other words, no real move toward disarmament.

To advance such sweeping proposals now seems impractical, but again let's remember that if Africa blows up the situation may look quite different once everyone has had a good fright. The African situation is particularly important to China because the Chinese seem to have allowed the Americans to persuade them to back the wrong side in Angola. This gave Russia and Cuba the opportunity to back the popular side in Ang~~ola~~ -- the MPLA -- while we and the Chinese were left looking silly backing the FNLA and UNITA, both colonial remnants and hangers-on. Certainly the Chinese are not going to remain on the wrong side in Africa forever, and certainly not much longer just to please us.

At a minimum, the Chinese can with plausibility push a drive for a tri-partite agreement among the USA, the USSR and China on the basis of the Bandung principles. And at a maximum they could make once more their dramatic suggestion that nuclear weapons lead only to extinction and therefore must be dealt with sensibly. If they can use Nixon in such an effort, they will. And Kissinger. And both may find plenty of incentive to go along. In any case, the Chinese have shown, in their exploitation of Nixon thus far, something of what we must learn to expect from now on if the Chinese continue strong and relatively united -- dynamic participation in international politics, on their own terms and in their own idiom. This is just the beginning. We have much to learn, ~~including~~ ^{including} the fact that any such Chinese proposal is going to have immense appeal to the entire third world with the possible exception of India, which seems to have wound up in the Soviet orbit. In any case, this election year is not going to be simple, or politics as usual, although every effort naturally will be made to make it appear that way.

No one regrets more than we that American cowardice and stupidity have allowed Nixon to survive as he has. He may yet go down the drain, but the signs as this moment are that ~~thanks~~ Chinese willingness to use him (as they always use whatever is available) has enabled him to regain something of a toehold toward respectability. It may turn out differently, but he seems on the way to being able to say, along with Mao, there ain't nobody in here but us elder statesmen, concentrating on the peace of the world and the future of mankind. All by default, but none the less the potential.

Best,



jdw