

# Nixon's China visit: What outcome?

WASHINGTON — President Nixon is now concentrating on his forthcoming visit to China—the great diplomatic experiment of his first term in office. He is working his way through a mountain of briefing papers, studying the transcripts of the Kissinger-Chou En-Lai conversations, and quietly putting out the word not to expect too much from this month's spectacular journey.

The history of these postwar summit meetings suggests that this is a prudent warning. The Eisenhower-Khrushchev conference at Geneva, the Johnson-Kosygin session at Glassboro, N.J., and the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation at Vienna all produced great expectations and even greater disappointments. Nixon has gone through all these records too, which helps explain why he is protecting himself now against a let-down at the end of the month.

## Meticulous preparation

None of those other summits was prepared with such meticulous care as Nixon's mission to Peking. He has been working up to this almost from his first few months in the White House, and he has not only been studying the problem, but acting to create a favorable atmosphere for his discussions with the Chinese leaders.

His disclosure of his efforts to reach a negotiated settlement in Vietnam is only the latest of these acts. It was a gamble to publicize Dr. Kissinger's secret negotiations with the Vietnamese Communists, and it irritated Hanoi, but the President wanted Peking to know that he had been trying to reach a compromise settlement before he arrived in the Chinese capital.

Nixon has already bet quite a lot on this Peking trip. By keeping it secret until the last minute of Kissinger's first trip to Peking, he irritated the Japanese and the Soviet Union, and undoubtedly helped start the negotiations between Moscow and Tokyo for a closer Japanese-Soviet relationship.

## Avoiding a split

Similarly, he sided with Pakistan against India in the recent war, at least

partly to avoid a split with Peking on this issue. Without his spectacular moves toward Peking, it is highly doubtful that Taiwan would have been expelled from the United Nations, and even now other

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U.S. allies in Asia, particularly South Korea, and Thailand are uneasy over the Nixon-Chou talks.

On balance, then, it would seem that China has already gained a good deal even from the preliminaries to the Peking trip. She has established herself in the U.N., she has reminded Moscow that the days of Chinese isolation are over and that the United States is taking an interest in China and in new security relations in Asia; she has loosened the ties between Washington and Tokyo and between Washington and Taiwan, and she will soon be showing over worldwide television the journey of an American President to the forbidden city, the summer palace, the great wall, and the serene beauty of the lakes and mountains around Hangchow.

## Nixon's hope?

What then, it is asked, can Nixon hope to get out of the China visit? In tangible terms, probably not much. Despite Nixon's publication of his peace terms for Vietnam, the chances are that he will get no support in Peking for any such accommodation, but rather a cool lecture on ending the killing and a recommendation that he accept the enemy's terms and get out of Indochina.

On Taiwan, he is almost certain to be asked why he still has several thousand troops in what Chou En-lai considers a province of China, and how would Nixon like it if China stationed troops in Hawaii or Long Island? On Japan, the Chinese government's view is that the U.S. is reviving the militarism of the Japanese people and helping the Japanese establish by economic means the "co-prosperity sphere" they tried to put together by force of arms in the last world war.

So the President is undoubtedly right

to minimize the expectations of the American people before he leaves. He may manage to arrange for cultural exchanges between China and the U.S., and negotiate some kind of exchange of trade missions or trade agents to explore the possibilities of increasing the commerce between the two countries, but even this is not sure.

## The imponderables

In the end, however, the imponderables of these talks may prove to be more important than anything else. We are still far from normalization of U.S. Chinese diplomatic relations, but the long process of exchanging views and establishing some means of orderly communication will have begun.

Also, it is not clear what part the Sino-Soviet dispute has played in China's willingness to break the long deadlock with Washington. That Peking is concerned over the presence of a million Soviet troops on her northern frontier is obvious from the fact that she is already building deep bunkers and underground shelters in all her main cities, but this is not the sort of dispute Nixon wants to enter.

After all, he is going on in this year of summits and elections from Peking to Moscow, and it is his purpose,

Not to take sides in the Sino-Soviet troubles, but to improve Washington's relations with both China and the Soviet Union, and if possible to lessen the tensions between the two Communist giants.

## Will take some doing

All this, however, will take some doing and some time. The President has been careful to reassure Moscow, Tokyo, London, Paris, Bonn, Seoul and Taipei that he is not going to Peking to make deals at the expense of any of his allies, but merely to reduce tensions wherever he can. And if he can do that, it will be a useful journey, even if he brings back nothing more than a cultural agreement and a little more trust that China and America can talk again about the common problems of the Pacific.