

Whatever Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai may think of Watergate, the leaders of the People's Republic of China are not talking. No change is seen, however, in basic policy with the U.S.

David Bruce, special envoy to the People's Republic, may sound out Mao and Chou on visiting the United States. Henry Kissinger remains an important link between the two countries.

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Watergate: The View From China

by Lloyd Shearer

PEKING.

What effect has the infamous Watergate scandal had upon U.S.-Chinese relations?

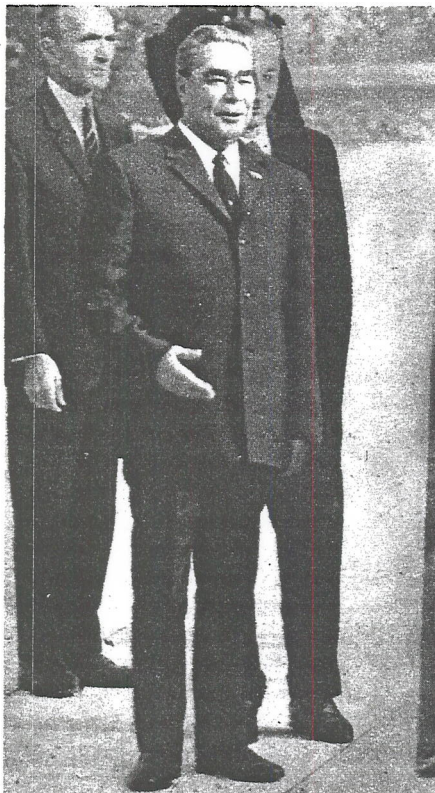
What do Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai, the venerated leaders of the People's Republic of China, think of the Nixon Administration now?

No one knows, of course, because neither of these elder statesmen is speaking. But the day-to-day developments of the sordid, reputation-destroying mess have been reported here in the daily news bulletin, "News From Foreign Agencies and Press," distributed by the Hsinhua News Agency throughout China.

The latest dirt

Moreover, anyone who has a short-wave radio receiver—and this includes every embassy, hotel, and almost every foreign journalist in Peking—tunes in the morning and nightly news, broadcast by the BBC (British Broadcasting Corp.) and the Voice of America specifically to obtain the latest Watergate dirt.

One result is that the Chinese currently refer to Watergate as the "Sueimen Scandal."



Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, whose summit talks in the U.S. are slated June 18-26. China, of course, will be watching and hoping that he stumbles.

"Suei" means water in Chinese, and "men" means gate.

The Chinese are a traditionally polite and circumspect people. When PARADE asked many Chinese officials their personal opinions on Watergate, most of them smiled and replied gently with a variation of, "We do not concern ourselves with the internal affairs of other nations."

Nixon's purge

One Peking source, however, when persistently pressed for his reaction, reluctantly explained his views. "Nixon has had to purge his politburo," he said, "of such men as Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, and others. I gather these were not particularly popular or elected officials to begin with. In other governments these purges go on all the time, and we are accustomed to them. But for this to happen in the United States Government—it is to say the least, most unusual.

"I do not believe," he continued, "that Watergate will change the basic policy of friendship and amity our two nations have embarked upon. Even if a great calamity should befall the American President—perhaps even the de-

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struction of his credibility—there is still Henry Kissinger to maintain the continuity of the relationship begun by our two countries in February, 1972. And even if Kissinger should depart, one must remember that nations are more enduring than the men who rule or represent them.

"Chairman Mao and Premier Chou did not enter into an agreement with Richard Nixon but with the United States of America. And that is why your special envoy, Mr. David Bruce, is here in Peking in charge of the U.S. liaison mission."

Diversionsary tactic?

On embassy row in the Chinese capital, rumors were generated that Bruce, the first U.S. diplomat of near-ambassadorial rank assigned to the People's Republic of China since the Communist takeover in 1949, would eventually sound out the Chinese on the possibility of Mao Tse-tung or Chou En-lai visiting the United States.

Such a move, one European diplomat pointed out, would serve as a diversionsary tactic, would in effect change the focus of American interest from Watergate to foreign affairs.

Although the U.S.-China relationship has now reached the honeymoon stage, the Chinese are far too clever to let themselves be used so overtly. Peking is not about to help Richard Nixon remove his burned chestnuts from the fires of Watergate.

Peking is perfectly content to let its arch enemy, the Soviet Union, involve itself in that highly perilous mission. Let Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, visit the United States and tie his foreign policy to Richard Nixon. Let him make speeches in Washington about the dawning of a new era of peace. But not Chairman Mao or Premier Chou.

Recall Khrushchev

Both of them well know what happened to another Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, in 1959, when at the height of his popularity, he visited President Eisenhower and contributed to what was subsequently called "The Spirit of Camp David."

Gary Powers and the CIA-sponsored U-2 flight over the Soviet Union took care of Khrushchev's popularity with the Soviet military leaders. And he was reduced to a non-person.

Brezhnev, whose visit is due June 18-26, may prove far more adroit than Khrushchev in protecting his flanks, both on the Soviet home front and the Eastern European bloc. But in China the hope is widespread that he will fall flat on his face and somehow get splattered with the Watergate mud.

The shortwave radios in Peking are tuned in hopefully to the possible sound of such splatter.