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Statement by Nixon Seen as Reflecting Major China Stand

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HONG KONG, Monday, Feb. 23 — Richard M. Nixon's implicit criticism of President Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger last night for taking part in the Helsinki talks on European security echoed one of China's most fervent attitudes.

China has repeatedly denounced the Helsinki meeting, which concluded the long East-West conference last year, for appeasement of what the Chinese see as an expansionist Soviet Union.

In his toast, at a banquet in Peking's Great Hall of the People, Mr. Nixon said that it "is naive" to believe that "the mere act of signing a statement, of principle or a diplomatic conference will bring lasting peace."

The former President's statement was one of the strongest expressions of support that the Chinese have received. It seemed to repay the Chinese amply for their generosity in inviting Mr. Nixon to Peking.

The banquet also provided

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Acting Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng with his first chance to speak in public since the stunning disclosure on Feb. 7 that he had assumed the post. It had been widely expected that Teng Hsiao-ping, the senior Deputy Prime Minister, would be appointed to take up the duties of Prime Minister Chou En-lai, who died last month.

At the banquet Mr. Hua delivered a vehement attack on the Soviet Union for its "rapid expansion," warning that the people of the world should heighten their vigilance against war. He thus apparently indicated that China's hostility toward Russia is not at issue in the current political controversy in Peking.

In a toast to Mr. Nixon, Mr. Hua offered few other clues to the nature of the conflict, which came out in the open after Mr. Chou's death. He did, however, say that the conflict here had taken the form of a revolutionary mass debate that would better the opportunity of the Chinese people to follow the teachings of Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

Hua in Dominant Role

The statement suggested that the conflict might be more limited than the Cultural Revolution of the 1960's. So far, the issue has been largely limited to attacks on unnamed rightists, in the press and on wall posters at selected universities.

The Nixon and Hua remarks were transmitted to Hong Kong by news agencies.

As he did Saturday night on Mr. Nixon's arrival at the airport, Mr. Hua dominated the Chinese side yesterday. He talked with the visitor for two hours and 20 minutes yesterday afternoon—on a broad range of international questions, a Chinese spokesman said—and he was the host of the official state banquet last night.

Mr. Hua's prominence seemed to strengthen his tenuous hold on his post, or at least made him a more believable candidate for Prime Minister than he was when he was appointed two weeks ago.

Primarily a Technocrat

At the time he appeared to have neither the seniority in the Chinese Communist Party—he was named to the Politburo only in 1973—nor a power base of his own that would enable him to hold the post in Peking's fierce personal and ideological battles.

The Acting Prime Minister is a tall and rather stocky man who is believed to be in his mid-50s. He is an agricultural and financial specialist, a tech-

nocrat, rather than an ideologue. He rose through the local party organization in Chairman Mao's home province of Hunan; when he was brought to Peking in 1972, he had no real experience in national, international or military affairs.

Conspicuous by his absence yesterday was Teng Hsiao-ping, the senior Deputy Prime Minister. He has not been seen since he read the eulogy for Mr. Chou on Jan. 15. But analysts recall that only last December, it was Mr. Teng who met with President Ford in the great Hall of the People and accompanied him to see Chairman Mao.

Hua a Poster Target?

Chinese officials have indicated that Mr. Teng still holds his posts—Deputy Prime Minister, Vice Chairman of the party and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, a formidable combination. So the analysts are reluctant to draw any firm conclusions about this latest puzzle. Moreover, there were some disquieting questions about just how secure Mr. Hua's position is.

Travelers from Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, have confirmed that wall posters had appeared there attacking, by name, the province's second party secretary, Chang Ping-hua. The attacks could be important: The Titular first party secretary of Hunan is still Mr. Hua. In a Chinese political battle a subordinate may be criticized first in order to isolate a bigger target who cannot be attacked directly.

Nixon Sees Chou's Widow

Yesterday afternoon Mr. Nixon met with Mr. Chou's widow, Teng Ying-chao, to express his condolences. Mr. Chou signed the Shanghai communiqué that concluded the first Nixon visit to China four years ago.

Mr. Nixon's meeting with the widow produced evidence that his trip had been arranged before Mr. Chou died on Jan. 8—and the current conflict in Peking emerged. Miss Teng told Mr. Nixon that her husband had been informed of the plans for the visit shortly before his death.

That seemed to suggest that the timing of the trip was not related directly to the power struggle, as some analysts have speculated. Mr. Nixon is said to have told associates that he received four invitations from the Chinese over the last year and a half; the timing of the trip may therefore have been his decision.

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