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Nixon Holds Long Talk With Mao

By Ross H. Munro
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PEKING, Feb. 23—Former President Richard Nixon conferred today for an hour and 40 minutes with Chairman Mao Tse-tung and then attended a music and dance show with Chairman Mao's wife, Chiang Ching.

It was one of the few times on record in recent years that Mao has met with a foreigner not holding political or government office. The meeting reflected the high regard in which the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party has indicated he holds the former president.

At the end of a "friendly conversation," as the New China News Agency described it, Mao asked Nixon to convey his regards to President Gerald R. Ford upon returning home.

Mr. Ford said through a White House spokesman Sunday that he has "no plans" to be briefed by Nixon on his China trip. At last night's music and dance show, the former president faced a highly sensitive diplomatic dilemma. Included in the program of the cultural soiree, as the Chinese called it, was a song about the Chinese people's determination to "liberate" the island of Taiwan, which still has a military defense treaty with the United States.

Sitting beside Nixon, with whom she chatted fre-

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quently during the evening, Madame Mao leapt to her feet to applaud while Nixon, apparently caught off guard, rose slightly in his seat but then gave the song only the minimum polite applause. Nixon's wife, Pat, rose briefly but took a cue from her husband and quickly sat down again.

It was the second night in a row that the outside of the Great Hall of the People was ablaze with lights in honor of the Nixons. The presence of Madame Mao, who now meets very few foreign visitors, was yet another indication of the warm welcome Nixon is receiving.

At the working level, Nixon met again today with Acting Premier Hua Kuo-feng. The two men have already conferred together for almost four and a half hours and are expected to have another meeting this afternoon. This puts Nixon in a unique position to report on the new acting premier and perhaps even shed some light on what is happening within the Chinese leadership, currently engaged in a power struggle.

Nixon gave the impression this morning that now and then he was slipping back into his presidential role. After viewing an agricultural exhibition, he suggested to his Chinese hosts that the United States might aid China in its efforts to modernize its agricultural sector.

"This is one area where we may be able to help your people," he said. Then he tried to make light of his

suggestion by saying, "we'll make an even trade—we will send you our machinery, our technology, if you desire, and you will send us your pretty girls who showed us around (the exhibit) today."

Nixon's humor succeeded only in provoking some embarrassed laughter from the Chinese present.

While touring the exhibit Nixon asked a number of incisive questions about Chinese agriculture and made comments which indicated that he has been well briefed for his China visit.

Mrs. Nixon, meanwhile, visited a model kindergarten in southeast Peking

where healthy, well-clothed and well-rehearsed children greeted her in chorus as she moved from room to room. Kindergarten officials later told Mrs. Nixon that this was a boarding kindergarten where nearly all the basic needs of the children are taken care of so the parents can devote all their time to their work. Parents don't have to worry about their children except on weekends, she was told.

The children, aged 3 to 7, are taught the message of class struggle. Mrs. Nixon's compliments were cautious. She praised "your beautiful children and your building."



United Press International

Pat Nixon hugs the six-year-old son of Li Fu-jung, a Chinese ping pong champion, during a tour of a Peking kindergarten that the boy attends.

