

What Nixon Says About Mao, Chou

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Richard M. Nixon says that during his historic trip to China in 1972 Mao Tse-tung told him that he was "comparatively happy" when right-wing governments took power in Western countries.

In the third of seven installments from his memoirs, the former President provided a few new details of his China initiative — probably the single-most important foreign policy move of his administration — including portions of his hour-long conversation with Chairman Mao.

Until now, official American participants in meetings with Mao, who died in 1976, have kept the content of their discussions confidential. The Nixon installment breaks the secrecy but provides virtually no insights into Nixon's strategic thinking or the actual contents of his serious discussions with the Chinese.

Nixon's China initiative was undertaken in secrecy with Henry A. Kissinger, his national security affairs adviser, early in the administration. The world was stunned when it was announced that Kissin-

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ger in July, 1971, had made a clandestine trip to Peking and that Mao had invited Nixon to visit him, in effect ending two decades of estrangement between Washington and Peking.

Discussing Kissinger's secret trip to China, Nixon said, "Before Kissinger left, we agreed on a single code word — Eureka — which he would use if his mission were successful and the presidential trip had been arranged."

"On July 11, Kissinger's aide, Al Haig, phoned that a cable from Kissinger had arrived," Nixon said.

"What's the message?" I asked.

"Eureka," he replied.

Nixon said that he had been impressed by Chou-En-Lai, the late Chinese premier, with whom he and Kissinger did most of their talking. In 1954, Chou was snubbed publicly when at a Geneva meeting the then U.S. secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, declined to shake hands with him.

"I knew that Chou had been deeply insulted by Foster Dulles' refusal to shake hands with him at the Geneva conference in 1954," Nixon wrote. "When I reached the bottom step, therefore, I made a point of extending my hand as I walked toward him. When our hands met, one era ended and another began."

Chou later took note of this when he told Nixon, according to the installment, "Today we shook hands, but John Foster Dulles didn't want to do that."

As to his meeting with Mao, Nixon said that it began, through an interpreter, with bantering about Kissinger's highly publicized friendships with women. His "dates" had been used as covers for his secret trips to Paris for talks with North Vietnamese officials.

"Mao remarked on Kissinger's cleverness in keeping his first trip to Peking secret," Nixon said.

"He doesn't look like a secret agent," I said. "He is the only man in captivity who could go to Paris 12 times and Peking once, and no one knew it — except possibly a couple of pretty girls."

"So you often make use of your girls?" Mao asked.

"His girls, not mine" I replied. "It would get me into great trouble if I used girls as a cover."

"Especially during an election," Chou remarked as Mao joined in the laughter.

Then, Nixon related Mao's discussion about right-wing governments: "I like rightists," Mao said, obviously enjoying himself. "People

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say that you are rightists — that the Republican party is on the right — that Prime Minister Heath is also to the right.

"They also say the Christian Democratic Party of West Germany is to the right. I am comparatively happy when these people on the right come into power."

Mao had made the same point about "rightists" in an interview with the late Edgar Snow, in 1970, who quoted Mao as saying that Mao preferred Nixon to Social Democrats and revisionists because he would probably be less deceitful than others. It was also a calculated decision by Mao to counter the Russians.

In the installment, Nixon did not address the Chinese problem with the Soviet Union that produced border clashes in 1969. He also did not mention any reported effort by the Russians to enlist American support against the Chinese — something discussed by H.R. Haldeman, Nixon's top aide, but denied by others, in his recent book.

Nixon said that he told Mao, "I would like to say that we know you and the prime minister have taken great risks in inviting us here."

"For us also it was a difficult decision. But having read some of your statements, I know that you are one who sees when an opportunity comes and then knows that you must seize the hour and seize the day." He said that Mao had beamed at this paraphrase from one of his poems.

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