

8 March 1972

Dear Harold:

Many thanks again for the magnificent flow of ~~ix~~ clips from the Washington Post. We're particularly glad to see those by Karnow and Marder. Don't always agree, but then who does ?

This will be a general reply to your mails of Feb 25, 28 and two on March 2, all stuffed with goodies which we've looked through and sampled but which remain to be read in detail.

In general I certainly agree with you that Nixon's main compulsion originating^{ed} in his domestic situation, far worse than even hinted at, which accounts for the TV spectacular and the vast amount of time, manpower and money spent on it. I'm also inclined to agree that straightening out some of the imbalance in the international situation simply by recognizing a few realities also will give him more room to crack down domestically, after the election, of course. His whole character will lead him inevitably toward state socialism, merely the logical extension of what we already have, but the speed with which he goes after it may be determined in part by domestic disturbances or the lack thereof.

Your perception that Chou was keeping his distance during appearances on camera is excellent. It means that while Nixon was playing to his electorate, Chou was playing to his -- primarily the Chinese people, including the hard-line militarists, but also the proletariat of the entire world. You are quite right that the Chinese understood what was available to them and used it to perfection. The Chinese image of a statesman is that of a patient, sometimes indulgent scholar who knows exactly what he is doing when dealing with barbarians.

I had forgotten about Chou's arm. Was reminded by Bernard Kalb or someone from Peking who explained that it was broken and badly set during the Long March. This sounds right, but I have not had time to look it up and verify it in earlier works done at the time or soon afterward.

As to whether the Peking visit can develop into a major development that genuinely turns history along a more sensible ~~kn~~ path, I have only one very serious worry -- the possibility that our military will resort to tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam. This the Chinese will not stand for. Our military -- and Nixon did too at one time -- make a distinction between strategic and tactical weapons, claiming that tactical nukes are now conventional weapons. The Chinese will never agree to this. To them, the dropping of the atomic bomb on the Japanese was just as meaningful as to the Japanese -- we had not used it on the Germans. It doesn't matter that the Germans surrendered before we had such bombs. No one is ever going to convince any non-white person that we would have used it against the white Germans. Our entire record is too racist for that to be believed. So is Europe's, for that matter.

At every opportunity the Chinese say they will never be the first to use nuclear weapons in any situation. The implication is that if someone else uses them, watch out. They mean this. They will not stand for tactical nukes^{US-01} anywhere in their part of the world. This can be depended upon.

Otherwise, as you yourself say, it is going to take many years to work out problems like Taiwan unless some new and now-undreamed-of formula can be found, simply because there are too many abysses to be bridged. There will be much jawing back and forth and mutual recrimination and bombast, but it's much to be doubted if the situation can ever again be quite as explosive as it has been at times in the past. Unless someone makes a horrible mistake, of course.

The Chinese have used Nixon's election campaign machinery to project world-wide an image of themselves which threatens no one, holds out the prospect of reasonable peace for everyone, and which is as promising as the Cold War (which it bids fair to defang) was threatening to every man alive on the planet. As I say, the only real threat to all this that I can see is the always present possibility that some hawk will take off into the wild blue yonder and throw the fat back into the fire. How's that for an unproductive mixture of metaphors?

You raise the question of whether it is fair to say that we drove the Chinese into the arms of the Russians, making the excellent point that there would have been in any case a great deal of fraternizing and solidarity in ideology in any case. Quite true, but it would still have had to overcome the history of the two countries. While it is true that they never have fought a major war along their long border, it is also true that some of the reasons they were able to avoid such a war no longer hold true and that both ~~peoples~~ peoples are inclined to be paranoid about each other. For equally good historical reasons. Russia was overrun by the Mongols (who probably had a good many Chinese pressed into service at all levels), having conquered China and India) and Chinese history records many invasions from the direction of Russia -- China, Tartars, Huns, Mongols, and Manchus.

If anything, the Russians are more paranoid than the Chinese, and don't ever imagine that Mao & Co. are forgetting the way Stalin preferred to prop up Chiang Kai-shek and even kept his embassy going in Canton until after the Chinese Communists were established in Peking. Nor that the Russians wrung from Chiang and T.V. Soong after World War II a restoration of Czarist special privilege in Manchuria, and even in the mutual aid treaty with Mao of 1950 managed to spin out relinquishing those rights for another 10 years. There are all sorts of chronic Sino-Russian problems such as Mongolia and Sinkiang, not to mention Tibet, which make genuine Sino-Soviet friendship a difficult, & fragile thing.

It began breaking down, perceptibly, in 1948 when Mao, who was a Tito long before Tito ever was heard of, denounced Tito before Stalin dared to and thus forced Titoism into the open and also forced Stalin to accept Mao's support because he was boxed in and could do nothing else.

Almost immediately Mao made his famous "lean to one side" speech in which he said China should in general lean to the side of the socialist and developing nations while relying on herself to solve her own problems. This was the watershed in Chinese communist policy, and would have been ~~possible~~ impossible under the circumstances had not Pat Hurley squelched Mao's offer of friendship to the US and the Cold Warriors suppressed the fact that it had been made.

The circumstances were that America's reservoir of goodwill among the Chinese people, whether logically so or not, never had been higher, because of the defeat of Japan. Few Chinese spoke or read Russian, even few Chinese Communists. A thousand times as many spoke and read English.

Furthermore, for some reason I never have been able to understand fully, they just liked Americans as people and had little but suspicion for Russians of any political stripe. If I described the apparent rapport with Americans as somewhat astounding, I was referring to the phenomenon of two dramatically different peoples speaking and thinking in radically different languages, coming from radically different cultures, finding anything in common. But they did. In some cases individuals didn't hit it off, but in most cases they did. Laughter often was the common denominator. I don't think I've ever seen an American and a Chinese laughing together. Both are too busy being American or Chinese. The Chinese disliked our military during the treaty port days and thoroughly despised our missionaries, yet tolerated both with much less heartburn than they did those of other countries. I can only suggest that they found us less repugnant as foreigners than other foreigners, for reasons which are not at all clear except that as a class we had more money to spend.

The point of all this is that Mao took over a China which was prostrate from many years of civil war and almost as many years of foreign invasion. She had to have help of some kind. When Hurley and his backers saw to it that we weren't to provide it, Mao had to take second best. He took Russia. If he wasn't pushed into this decision, which was anything but popular with the great mass of the people, he was left no other choice.

When MacArthur went on his little rampage in Korea, in spite of Chou's warning not to come too close, that did it. Anti-Americanism became a politically viable thing in China and was exploited to the fullest to help consolidate the revolution through rallying to combat an external threat. Mao also used the occasion to get Russia to help build China's fighting force into the strongest in Chinese history.

Naturally, the Russians did not appreciate this, and it all added to their own distrust and suspicions about the Chinese. Ever since I caught on sometime during World War II that Stalin was supporting Chiang instead of his Communist buddy Mao, I have been conscious that the Russians suffer from a suppressed guilt complex about China. This may help explain some of Khrushchev's silence and glossing over of questions relating to China. They just don't like to think about it, neither as Russians nor as Communists.

This of course grossly oversimplifies Khrushchev's role in Sino-Russian relations. At times he tried very hard -- harder even than Nixon because as a Russian he knew there was a significance to going to Peking which Nixon may not yet fully realize -- but the fact that in the end he gave it up as a bad job and withdrew all Russian technicians from China in 1960 meant only that he felt hopelessly outwitted and outmaneuvered. Which, no doubt, he was. Rome simply didn't know what to do with Byzantium.

I haven't read his book, but saw it in paperback the other day and shall pick it up, hoping some time to find time to read it. When K. was here that time several years ago and explored the mysteries of a supermarket and other local attractions, the AP ~~was~~ assigned a veteran police reporter type to go along. He came back marveling at K's common touch -- said he could just as easily be a ward ^{keeper} ~~keeper~~ from Fresno if he weren't limited to speaking Russian. I believed it. K always seemed to me to personify that admirable thing about the Russians -- their willingness to be completely honest and candid once they felt sure you wouldn't stab them in the back. And they have a pride and open generosity under the same circumstances which has to be experienced to be believed.

Several people have told me about the program you mentioned, Misunderstanding China. Apparently an excellent job, closely paralleling if not duplicating a book written in 1964 called "A Curtain of Ignorance," written by Felix Greene. Felix is a cousin of Graham Greene, an old World War II BBC sidekick of Elsa Thompson, who went to China first in 1957 and wrote a book thereafter called China, the Country Americans Are Not Allowed to Know. A Curtain of Ignorance was partly researched by Julian Schuman, a post-World War II ABC correspondent in China who stayed on after the revolution to work with Bill Powell on the China Weekly Review after the Reds took over. Bill, his wife and Julian were indicted for treason here in the early 1950s but after several years the indictment was dismissed for lack of evidence. Julian went back to China with Felix in the early 1960s and has been there ever since. His name has appeared recently on a few UPI stories out of Peking, but I gather he's working mostly for the Peking government. However that may be, A Curtain of Ignorance is a magnificent compilation of the lies and halftruths that have been spread about China from the beginning. Felix published a new book about a year ago called The Enemy, meaning imperialism. The job done on it by the publishing industry closely parallels the one done on F-U. We had a postcard from him today from Peking. He's been there since November. Says the Nixon invasion has come and gone, and everyone is calm and totally unimpressed.

Enclosed, among other things, are four articles by Service on his recent trip to China (before Nixon) which we thought you might enjoy.

Thanks again for everything you've been sending, and best from us both.


jdw