

17 August 1975

HW:

These two clippings add up to a low-key affirmation of our developing suspicions about Nixon: there has been a fundamental change in his posture, possibly indicating a new bargain of some kind with Ford.

He is more cheerful and keeps busy, well enough to say he's 90 per cent new but not ~~well~~ too well to risk being subpoenaed to testify in a court. The big change in his dickering with Frost and others over TV rights is that he now says they can't be released before the 1976 election is over. At the same time he now is supposed to be willing to discuss Watergate.

To look back, last January he floated a couple of trial balloons as he was emerging from his illness: he would like to resume activity in GOP politics and also would like to be ambassador to China. We thought then and believe even more firmly now that his interest in GOP politics was a threat -- a threat he is tempering somewhat now by talk of discreet private calls to GOP leaders but with the implication that he will take no open part in campaigning until the 1976 election is over. But no definite commitment, so the threat may remain in the background.

Our feeling that the Peking Man relics are somehow involved in all this continues undiminished. You may recall that last spring and early this summer Christopher Janus got considerable publicity about the possibility of finding the bones in a cabin back of the Bendleton Marine Base. He even hired a helicopter and searched unsuccessfully for the cabin, then ostensibly abandoned the search. This gambit was accompanied by talk of how nice it would be for Ford to take the bones with him when he goes to Peking this fall. With no visible prospect of finding the bones in time, Ford presumably will have to go to Peking without them.

What has this got to do with Nixon's posture? Well, suppose that during ~~his~~ his presidency Nixon managed to get hold of the bones and salt them away somewhere for use later, such as when he returned to Peking some day to re-establish full relations. Suppose that somehow he still has control of them in some way. Note that he has telephoned Ford at least five times to the one time Ford phoned him on his birth day. Note also that he has talked with Kissinger even more by phone. None of this necessarily means anything, but there is the possibility that if Nixon still controls the bones (and Kissinger has to be in on it somehow) he very well could have vetoed the idea that Ford would take the newly discovered bones to Peking this fall, with the result that Janus had to call off his search rather suddenly.

What ~~is~~ Nixon still wants to be ambassador to Peking, and plans ~~to~~ not only to take the bones with him but use them in the meantime as a lever to get the appointment? That's stretching things, but so was vetoing any rapprochement with China for 25 years until he could pull it off himself. As for Ford, the probability is still high that if he could bring himself to be ~~backmailed~~ ~~into~~ pardoning Nixon, there is no reason ~~why~~ suppose he couldn't be pressured into naming him ambassador to Peking. As I've pointed out earlier, there are reasons to think the Chinese would not be unwilling to accept him, depending on other aspects of the bargain, mainly the Taiwan situation.

The bones remain to be found, of course, and it always is possible that they may be found in time for Ford to take them this fall. In which case he may have paid what Nixon's price was to turn loose of them, assuming Nixon has control of them.

Nixon has a thing about China, regarding it as his greatest triumph, so his desire to be ambassador fits in perfectly. It is clear that while he has softened his threat about mixing in with GOP politics, he has no intention of ~~staying~~ quietly at San Clemente after the 1986 election is over and his memoirs are finished and his version of Watergate not only published ~~and~~ but aired on TV. Already he is talking of travelling abroad. To think this is not serious, and not taken seriously by both Republicans and Democrats, is to rely on a totally unjustified euphoria. His nature is such that he cannot stay quiet in private but must be in the public eye, soaking up the attention he must have. China is his best chance for such attention, he thinks, and he has a time constraint in the age of Mao and Chou. Delivered to even another olster like Teng Shao-p'ing, the bones could make much less of a splash, and none at all if turned over to some of the younger party leaders who are working their way up through the heirarchy.

We have clips on all items that have appeared bearing on this possible connection, and I've tried to keep Larry Finley up to date on the Peking Man angle with the idea that he might run into something revealing about Janus.

This brings the situation up to date, I believe, in a general way. The persistent reappearance of the Peking Man story in the news during the past three years is too consistent to be ignored. It has to mean something, and it could be part of a developing bargain between Ford and Nixon with Kissinger functioning as a point of contact if nothing else.

Best,



jdW