

December 4, 1975

POOL REPORT #23
USLO Luncheon

The President and party arrived at the Liaison Office at 12:08 pm, about 15 minutes late. Mrs. Ford and Susan arrived separately more or less on time. In the foyer of the Bush residence, the 16 children of the Liaison Office's staff were lined in a row to greet the President. The oldest appeared to be perhaps 8 years old and there was at least one child in arms.

The President came into the foyer and was greeted by Mrs. Bush, who said, "They're going to tell you their names." The President shook hands with each child in turn, and with a few exceptions each introduced himself or herself and got a "nice to see you, David" etc.

Christine Ogden, the 3 1/2 year old daughter of First Secretary Jerry Ogden, was holding a print of the President's official portrait. When prodded by Mrs. Bush, she asked for an autograph. The President held the picture against his left knee and signed it "To Christine Ogden, best wishes, Jerry Ford". One little girl had to be nudged by her father to stick out her hand for the President to shake, and one shy little boy put his hands over his ears when the President approached.

Then the President walked into the adjoining drawing room, an airy, gaily decorated rectangular room with almost electric yellow walls. Susan and Mrs. Ford were already in the drawing room when the President entered. The three Fords and senior staff -- Cheney, Kissinger, Hartmann, Scowcroft, Nessen, Lynn et al -- mingled with the staffers; their wives and children, for about ten minutes. Barbara Bush was taking pictures for posterity all the while.

Then the President went outside into the inner courtyard to pose for photographers; there was some banter about George Bush being a hot tennis player. Then the President disappeared from view, apparently for a tour of the Liaison Office before lunch.

Back in the drawing room, Secretary Kissinger, who seemed in a very good mood except for a Newsweek article about him this week which he termed "fiction", was asked about the talks. He promised to give us a general rundown of the talks tonight, and reminded the pool, "I told you before we left there would be no spectacular announcements."

"On the other hand, unless you think we and the Chinese are running a big confidence game, you can tell that both sides are satisfied with the results." He then talked briefly about detente; the pool missed a piece of this but the essence of the remarks were that events would prove which assessment of detente was right -- ours or the Chinese. Kissinger also said "You can assume we've discussed every international problem" during the talks. As for the Mao meeting, "this was much more detailed and much warmer (than the Nixon meeting). It's no reflection on Nixon; Nixon was the first American leader to see Mao... now we have got ongoing relations... He described Mao as "very vigorous" much better than when they had met in October, and "extraordinarily acute."

As for a communique, "We didn't even try for a communique...we decided on the first day not to try because it just didn't lend itself..." Then he added in jest, "We did in two days here what it took three days to do," again emphasizing that he was jasting. Between bites of a very tasty springroll, Kissinger said he had tremendous affection for Chou En-lai but that he gets along with Teng."

Tom DeFrank

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