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B A C K G R O U N D B R I E F I N G

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH A U.S. OFFICIAL

AT 3:15 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 28, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: As we promised, you see the senior American official before you who will first give you some details of the China trip on background and then answer some questions on background, and then if you have any other questions on other subjects, we can go on the record.

As you all know, the President plans an announcement at 4 o'clock. He will not start until you get over there but it might be good to hold this entire event to about a half-hour.

QUESTION: What will the subject be of the President's announcement?

MR. NESSEN: You will see very shortly.

QUESTION: Is it a sudden decision on your part to meet the --

MR. NESSEN: The senior American official is here.

U.S. OFFICIAL: The reason I am going on background on the China part is not because I have anything wildly startling to say but because the delicacy of our relationship makes it complicated to go on record beyond what I have already said in my Detroit speech.

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Basically, we consider the trip important, though no major announcements are going to come out of it. It is important for the architecture of American foreign policy and for the overall structure of international relations. For that reason, too, it is not likely that -- in fact, it is not expected, nor will it be attempted -- that anything that lends itself to any startling announcement is going to emerge.

There are three aspects to our relations with the People's Republic of China. One is the geopolitical relationship. That is to say, the interest that the United States and the People's Republic have in common in a structure of international relations that preserves their essential security.

The second is their aspect of normalization that is related to, largely, to Taiwan and the third is a series of bilateral issues such as exchanges, trade and so forth, that have been going on and will continue to go on.

What basically brought the United States and the People's Republic together is the geopolitical aspect; that is to say that the People's Republic of China decided and we decided that the overall security of the international order would be better maintained if the United States and China had a relationship of dialogue with each other than if they were in a position of permanent hostility. That has fueled our relationship up to now and will continue to fuel our relationship.

On the so-called normalization problem, we have stated in the Shanghai Communique that our objective was normalization and we have indicated a number of other things, such as gradual reduction of our forces. That process of normalization has progressed since the last meeting and it will continue to progress but there will be no significant change on that on this visit. For that reason, too, the bilateral relations, exchanges and so forth, which are important, are nevertheless subsidiary to the other two aspects and are used as the two sides find necessary but they are not an end in themselves.

Now, precisely because the major element of the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic depends on the perception of the international order, it is essential that the top leaders of both countries meet at some intervals.

Now an American President has not met with Chinese leaders since 1972. Since that time there have been changes in the People's Republic. Chou-En-Lai, with whom we had conducted our discussions until the end of 1973, is no longer active and Teng Hsiao-p'ing has replaced him. President Ford, of course, took over here in 1974 and, therefore, the exchanges on the international situation between the two leaders are of great consequences even when they do not lead or are not intended to lead to any concrete announcements.

The most important results of the 1972 visit also were not what was in the Communique but what was the process that it started.

Now, in assessing this trip you also have to understand it is quite conceivable, in fact it is inevitable, that the Chinese perception of some international problems differs from our own. We are not there to convince the Chinese of the correctness of all of our perceptions, nor are we going there to be convinced by them of the correctness of all of our (their) perceptions.

We conduct a global policy, and we will not, as I said in Detroit, have our perceptions of our interests dictated by another country. We are opposed to expansionism and we have resisted it in the entire post-war period, what has been expressed in our two Joint Communiques with the Chinese as hegemony.

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But the methods by which we pursue this are our own, and we do not exclude a change in relationship with potential adversaries. That has not changed the fact that we have certain fundamental interests in common with the People's Republic of China, that we attach the greatest importance to that relationship, that from all we can tell the Chinese attach importance to this relationship as is witnessed by the fact that this trip is taking place in the face of many changes, and so I repeat, it is a trip of great importance to the architecture of our foreign policy but not a trip that can be measured by spectacular announcements.

The President will spend several hours each day talking to Chinese leaders, the rest of the time doing his own business or making cultural visits following, roughly, the schedule that in this sense that has become customary on American visits to China either by myself or by his predecessor.

That is all I want to say on the China trip. Why don't we take some questions on that and then go on the record on any other issues that you have.

QUESTION: A Georgia Congressman is getting up a petition, a resolution -- and I think he needs only four more votes in the House -- to make sure that President Ford makes no binding commitment on Taiwan when he is in China. What is your impression of this?

U.S. OFFICIAL: The question is, a Georgia Congressman is circulating a petition which seems to lack only four signatures to contain a majority -- House resolution, that we should make no binding commitments with respect to Taiwan. Any decisions that the United States makes on Taiwan would, of course, be fully discussed with the Congressional leadership. I do not believe that on this trip the process of normalization will be concluded so it will not be relevant to this trip, although progress towards it can be made.

QUESTION: How can you say that normalization continues or will progress if you can't really make any headway involving the Taiwan problem?

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U.S. OFFICIAL: I am not saying we cannot make any headway. I am saying that we will not conclude the progress of normalization. We will move towards it but we will not conclude it.

QUESTION: What sort of headway could you envisage on the Taiwan issue?

U.S. OFFICIAL: Well, first of all, this depends very largely on our own actions and anything we do is not really subject to negotiation until we get to the final phase of it. We have been, as was foreseen in the Shanghai Communique, progressively reducing forces in the Taiwan area as tensions in Asia diminished just as was foreseen in the Shanghai Communique.

We have increased our contacts with the Chinese, we have made progress in the liaison offices, so there is an area between full normalization and the status quo that can be explored, but it is not the principal purpose of the visit.

QUESTION: Are you making any progress toward getting the Chinese on both sides of the Straits to get together to talk over their problems?

U.S. OFFICIAL: That is assuming that that is what we are doing and what we are attempting to do.

QUESTION: Can you be any more specific as to just what sort of things the two leaders can agree upon that would improve the normalization process, things that would happen as a result of this meeting?

U.S. OFFICIAL: I thought I just got through telling you that the primary purpose of the trip had to do with the overall structure of international relations and all the questions of what we can do to improve normalization which I said was not the principal purpose of the trip. I have given you the range of things that can be done and I don't think I want to go beyond that.

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QUESTION: The reason I asked is that you had just gotten done saying you expected the process to be continued as a result of this meeting so that is why I am asking you to be more specific, if you can.

U.S. OFFICIAL: The process of normalization will continue as a result of this meeting and, as I have said and as the President has said, we intend to complete it in one timeframe and under what conditions, this remains to be discussed.

QUESTION: When will you know just who it is that the President will be meeting with in China, or do you know?

U.S. OFFICIAL: I think we do know. The President will have most of his substantive meetings, I would expect all of his substantive meetings, his normal substantive meetings, with Teng-Hsiao-p'ing, the Vice Premier.

The normal procedure when Heads of State visit in China is that Mao receives the Head of State but it is also the normal procedure that the appointment is not scheduled for a specific time prior to the arrival.

We would expect on the Chinese side the Chinese Foreign Minister, Ch'iao Kuan hua, and one or two others would sit in on all of the meetings with at least Teng Hsiao-p'ing but you can expect that Teng Hsiao-p'ing will be the principal interlocutor of the President except for his meeting with Mao.

QUESTION: And he will meet with the Chairman? You fully expect that but you don't know for sure?

U.S. OFFICIAL: Well, it would be a most unusual occurrence if a President came to China and did not meet with the Chairman so we expect him to make it.

QUESTION: Since the People's Republic of China and the United States appear to be backing the same force in Angola, would you expect to discuss the Soviet intervention in Angola and whatever the PRC and the United States are doing there or can do together?

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U.S. OFFICIAL: Well, the general experience of all conversations between senior Americans and the Chinese is that there is a very systematic and searching review of the world situation so I would not be surprised if that problem were also discussed. We will not pursue coordinated policies with the Chinese in Angola but it is possible that we come to parallel conclusion.

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QUESTION: In your initial remarks, relative to the differences and the perception of problems, were you trying to prepare us there for a possibility that the President may encounter the same open disagreements with the Chinese of U.S. perception in the Soviet Union as you encountered in October?

U.S. OFFICIAL: What I encountered seems to be the standard reception that all Westerners are getting in China these days. Chancellor Schmidt received substantially the same lectures that I did. And I consider it very possible that either publicly or privately we hear substantially the same Chinese analysis that was then made.

This is a subject of discussion. We will not try to convince them of our point of view. I don't think it is imperative that we have exactly the same assessment as to the tactics that either side should use. We agree that the domination of the world by military force should be prevented.

Now within that area we can discuss -- this is the fundamental perception that needs to be discussed -- but I would not be surprised if somewhere along the line some comments would be whispered to you similar to the ones that were elicited by the group that accompanied me.

QUESTION: Can you tell us how you see the Soviet perception of the Sino-American connection beginning in 1972 to the present time, how it has evolved?

U.S. OFFICIAL: Well, I would think that 1971 is when it began evolving. I think perhaps the Soviet Union thought when it occurred that it was a more dramatic and more sweeping event than it turned out to be.

On the other hand, I think it is perfectly safe to say that neither Peking nor Moscow are enchanted by our relationship with the other and that both Peking and Moscow would be happier if we did not have the relationship with the other. Their increased happiness would not necessarily be translated into better relations with us. It might be translated into worse relationships with us.

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I would not say there is a direct correlation between joy and friendship with the United States but, be that as it may, we will not permit either side of this equation to tell us what relations we can have with the other and this applies to Moscow as well as to Peking.

QUESTION: Is that the main reason for this trip? Is that the real reason for the trip?

U.S. OFFICIAL: The reason for the trip is not a negative one of telling them what they cannot do. The real reason of this trip is to discuss as seriously as we possibly can our perceptions of the world scene with each other to see where we agree and to handle those areas in which we disagree.

There is no reason for the President to go to tell them what they should not say to us. This I am telling you for your guidance. They are free to say anything to us that they choose.

The major reason of the trip, which after all has been planned for a year, is to enable the leaders of both sides, who have not met each other, to check each other's perception of the world situation when 90 percent of their relationship depends on that perception.

QUESTION: Do you expect to discuss with the Chinese leaders the present state of detente and, more specifically, the present state of the SALT II negotiations?

U.S. OFFICIAL: And get some technical advice on how to handle the Backfire and Cruise Missile issue.

We have always made it a point to inform both sides of where we were heading in our policy with the other and so we will undoubtedly put before the Chinese leaders our perception of detente, just as they will no doubt put before us their perception of detente, but the perception of detente is not necessarily the same as the perception of what is needed. That does not prevent an agreement on the question of expansionism.

QUESTION: What can you tell us about Indonesia and the Philippines? What are the purposes of those trips?

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U.S. OFFICIAL: These two countries -- are there any more questions on China?

QUESTION: Is there anything about Korea? Will that be South Korea?

U.S. OFFICIAL: I would expect that the question of Korea will undoubtedly come up in the discussions.

QUESTION: Do you have any indication on whether the President will get to see Chou En-lai?

U.S. OFFICIAL: On that, we have no information. Chou En-lai has been too ill or, at any rate, has not been available for foreign visitors since early July. What the state of his health is today we don't know. It is not absolutely excluded but we have had no indication.

QUESTION: What difference does the absence of Chou En-lai make in the negotiations, in meeting with the Chinese leaders? Mr. ^Teng is a different man than Mr. Chou

U.S. OFFICIAL: Well, the basic Chinese policy, as the basic American policy, is determined by permanent values and interests and it is not affected by personality. At the same time, these permanent values and interests have been translated into specific conclusions and this has to be done through one or more individuals.

Chou En-lai without a doubt was one of the most experienced diplomats in the world and a man of great subtlety and skill with whom we had all gotten to know quite well. I don't believe that the change to Teng Hsiao-p'ing has affected anything except his style of the policy which is blunter under Teng Hsiao-p'ing than it was under Chou but which is not significantly different in its main directions.

QUESTION: I take it you are ruling out any resolution of the foreign claims or the blocked assets in these negotiations.

U.S. OFFICIAL: I consider it unlikely.

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Now, on Indonesia and the Philippines, those two countries were profoundly affected by the collapse of Indochina and have attempted to define their new orientation in the interval and their relationship to the United States. They are, of course, traditional friends of ours.

The Philippines, which we have had a long and close relationship and Indonesia, as well, in the post-war period, both of these leaders have repeatedly invited the President to visit their countries if he came to Asia and, therefore, it seemed to us important on this trip to Asia to discuss with their leaders the role their countries can play and the relationship that the United States can have with them.

Again, these are not occasions in which in 24 hours great announcements can be made, but there is no substitute for a detailed exchange of views particularly as the orientation depends on their assessment of what the United States' role in the area is going to be and on their self-confidence in pursuing their national policies.

QUESTION: Can we go on the record now?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, let's do that. Let's take a minute now for the senior American official to leave the stage and Secretary Kissinger to come out.

If we do this in about 10 minutes we will be able to get to the other events of the afternoon.

END (AT 3:38 P.M. EST)