

December 2, 1975

PRESS POOL #9 - Bilateral Meeting, The Great Hall

The Chinese participants, led by Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-Ping, waited for the President and the American Party in a reception Hall with a large artwork in the background. It was a huge pine tree wrought in iron in a frame, with Chinese characters in the upper right corner, saying, "Pine of the Welcome Guest." As the President came in and shook Teng's hand, he said, "It was a delightful evening last night." The President was followed by Secretary of State Kissinger, George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, Philip Habib, Winston Lord, and Richard Solomon.

The all went to a large conference room in the rear of the artwork and Ford and the other American officials sat with their backs to the wall along a long rectangular table. The Chinese participants sat opposite facing a huge painting on the wall of a kind of vernal scene. Teng, through his interpreter Nancy Tang, asked about the trip. Ford said that it wasn't, "Too bad at all. Our stop in Alaska was very comfortable." Then the President repeated that it was, "A delightful evening, very enjoyable," last night. Teng said, "I hope you had a good rest."

"A good night, very restful," the President replied. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity for sightseeing this afternoon." The President then added that it was a pleasant morning with the sun out. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity to talk to you," The President said.

Then there was some palaver about smoking. It went something like this:

Teng -- "I see that your press has been talking about my chain smoking."

There was laughter from the American side as Teng continued: "Our Foreign Minister has the same bad habit as I have."

Kissinger -- "Didn't he stop once?"

Foreign Minister Ch'iao Kuan-Hua -- "I tried to cure myself of this habit for ten years. I always failed."

President -- "If you don't mind, I'll smoke a pipe." He drew a pipe out and started to load it with tobacco.

Teng -- "I suppose people who don't smoke are the best people in the world, those who smoke a pipe are the second best, those who smoke cigarettes like us are the worse people in the world."

Kissinger -- "My wife smokes a lot. She went to a doctor, and the nurse stopped smoking."

There was additional conversation which mercifully went unheard, as the pool was ushered out of the room.

Peter Lisagor - Chicago Daily News