
Presentation by Soviet Ambassador Comrade Tolstikov at the „Club“ of heads of fraternal diplomatic representations on 7 February 1972 (proof-read and revised according to a manuscript made available in Russian)

Chinese-American relations and their perspectives in the light of Nixon's trip to Beijing

In July of last year, Beijing and Washington simultaneously announced the trip of U.S. President Nixon to China. Bourgeois, especially American, propaganda attributes a touch of sensation to this trip, which for some months had been preceded by a so-called "ping-pong-diplomacy" starting with an American sports team's visit to China. Washington now labels the intended trip of the American President to Beijing as a manifestation for the "love of peace", "a turn to peaceful policy", a "pleasant sensation", and "the biggest success of the man in the White House" etc.

Examining the character of Chinese-American relations over the last twenty to twenty-five years more thoroughly, and analyzing the positions taken by both sides in their relationship to each other, their open and concealed struggle for influence in Asia as well as in other parts of the world, and - on the other hand - the balanced policy respecting the position of the other partner in important international issues, it becomes apparent that the current intense rapprochement between Beijing and Washington has already been in the making for many years.

It is known that Mao has already said in the 1940s that there are only two options for China - either with the Soviet Union, or with the United States. There would be no third option. Mao's statements during a talk with American diplomats in Yan'an in August 1944 also fall into this category. They are quoted in an article by John Emmerson, a fellow at the 'Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace' at Stanford University and former U.S. Ambassador [actually: Minister] to Japan, and published in July 1971 by the Japanese journal 'Pacific Community': "We must not risk a clash with the United States", the 'Great Helmsman' then revealed: "In the end, we Chinese think of you Americans as the ideal of democracy. We do not expect any Russian support [...]. Chinese and American interests resemble and supplement each other. They are tuned to each other economically and politically. We can and we must cooperate. [...] America has no reason to fear that we would not be willing to cooperate. We have to work together, and we need American help. Therefore it is important for us Communists to know what you Americans think and plan. We cannot risk offending you." It turns out that those words, uttered more than a quarter century ago, provide a pretty exact and clear illustration of the Chinese leadership's current point of view with regard to their current position towards the United States. In some respect they can explain today's flirt between Beijing and Washington whose underlying goals are opposed to the interests of socialism and of all anti-imperialist forces.

As it has been remarked before, both parties have already sought a mutual rapprochement for quite some time. It is no accident that the paper 'Washington Daily News' has commented on President Nixon's decision to follow the invitation of the Chinese government to visit Beijing as the "culmination of 26 years of efforts by Mao and Zhou Enlai to organize a meeting with the American President". As we, and political observers in China and abroad, have observed with respect to the "new wave" in Chinese-American relations initiated by Beijing, Prime Minister Zhou is the initiator and driving force of this rapprochement. His petit bourgeois background now comes to the fore. As a smart and skilled politician, he is eager to indicate to his foreign conversation partners (Japanese and American) how the initiatives for the rapprochement between

the PR of China and the United States, and the invitation of American athletes, followed by the invitation of the American President to China etc., have been Mao Zedong's personal. By doing that, Zhou at the same time apparently attempts to divert domestic criticism and uneasiness over the new line of the Maoist leadership towards the United States from his person. However, the struggle over this new line has already begun. One might assume that in this battle some setbacks are laying ahead.

It seems to us that the article published by the 'Washington Post' last summer saying that the invitation to Nixon mirrors a years-old-position of China, contained some indications of the Chinese Prime Minister's leading role in the "escalation" of Chinese-American relations. Already in 1964, the paper stated, had President Johnson received an invitation similar to the one Zhou Enlai issued to President Nixon. China had let President Johnson know through intermediaries in case the United States would harbor any doubts about the Chinese leaders' intentions, Zhou Enlai would welcome somebody close to the President if this person would be willing to listen to Zhou. President Nixon has sent Henry Kissinger, while Johnson had not sent anybody.

In the twenty-two years since the Chinese Revolution, no trip of a high-ranking foreign guest has been prepared so carefully and scrupulously as Nixon's upcoming trip to China. Preparations started namely with the education of the Chinese people in order to justify the rapprochement with Washington. For two decades the Chinese public had been indoctrinated how there would be no contacts with American imperialism, as long as the latter would not give up its support for Jiang Jieshi and the occupation of Taiwan, and stop its aggression against Vietnam.

Beijing's leadership made a turn by 180 degrees in its America policy. Its propaganda started to explain the legitimacy and necessity of compromises and setbacks in the course of following a political line. A number of anti-American phrases disappeared from the Maoist dictionary or were considerably toned down. In particular, Beijing doesn't voice any more the call for the creation of a "most comprehensive united front to fight against the American aggressors and their lackeys", as it had been announced by Mao in his propagandistic speech of 20 May 1970, soon after the expansion of American aggression into Cambodia.

The official Chinese rulers will provide a festive reception to the entire White House delegation. They will be received with all honors on the highest level in the capital as well as in all the other locations. In Beijing they will usually be received by Zhou Enlai and other high-ranking members of the Chinese hierarchy. In this context it suffices to mention the meetings and talks of the Chinese Prime Minister with Kissinger and his delegation, with General Haig who had led preparations for the logistical organization of the Nixon visit, and, before all that, with many American representatives, athletes, physicians, and students.

(By the way, here is another interesting detail in our view: While during 1970 only a single American went to China, the well-known Edgar Snow, during 1971 already thirty delegations and numerous individual 'friends' came to the PR of China, altogether no less than 200 people from the United States).

Zhou's extraordinary activity in flirting with the Americans gives the impression as if the Chinese Premier, who is playing in this occasion with high stakes, is in a hurry and worries that he might not be able to link his name to the history of Chinese-American relations, and someone else could instead take over the initiative.

Under Zhou's leadership Beijing's political and diplomatic activity aims at not deterring Washington, and not to impair the upcoming visit of the American President. Zhou is cautious in condemning the intensified U.S. aggression against Vietnam and other countries of Indochina, reacts extremely calmly to the resumption of the bombing of the PR of Vietnam by the American air force, and ignores Nixon's recent declaration that the United States will not renounce its support for Taiwan and will not cancel the "defense treaty" with Jiang Jieshi. The Maoists talk more and more often about the "Chinese-American friendship" under the cover of the "friendship between the Chinese and the American people".

In the last ten years the United States endeavored to assess the nature of their relationship with the PR of China comprehensively and considered the changes in the entire world, particularly in Asia. They try to match their China policy with their general line of foreign policy. When Nixon came to power, his administration inherited a couple of foreign policy problems that were either unresolved or stuck in a dead end, among them the China problem. If one talks about the China policy of the United States, one has to keep in mind that it always took into consideration the status of China's relations with the community of socialist countries, and especially with the Soviet Union. China policy of the United States was, almost until the end of the 1950s, based on the doctrine of „containment and isolation“ [and of] „limited animosity“. When under the pressure of circumstances, and based on programmatic goals, the leadership of the PRC has largely cooperated with socialist states.

Tendencies among leading political circles in the United States to seek a new policy line towards China have been provoked by the CCP's turning away from the agreed policy of the international communist movement, and the open animosity of the Mao Group towards the Soviet Union and other socialist countries which had been adopted as the party and state policy of the Maoists at the 9th Party Congress of the CCP.

China policies of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations had been considerably influenced by the nationalistic, big-power-chauvinistic line of the Chinese leadership after 1957. The idea of this policy was trying to minimize the tensions in American-Chinese relations, to "slow down" the solution of tricky questions dividing the two countries (the question of Taiwan, the American aggression in Vietnam, and others) and to attempt to enter into a dialogue with the Chinese leaders on the improvement of relations between Beijing and Washington. It is evident that the American government at this occasion tried to use China's anti-Soviet line in order to put pressure on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Claims of various groups in the United States to change the old policy of "containment and isolation" had been voiced many times in the American Congress over the last years, like in the "Subcommittee for the Far East and Pacific" between 1965 and 1968, in the "Committee on Foreign Relations" in 1966, at numerous conferences, panels, on radio and TV etc.

These claims were mirrored in the declarations of American politicians on the willingness of the United States to reinvent their China policy on the basis of the new doctrine "containment without isolation" of which Prof. Barnett is said to be the author. By developing this doctrine during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, representatives of the United States have repeatedly and openly suggested, also during American-Chinese talks at the ambassadorial level in Warsaw, and seemingly as well during bilateral talks in third countries (France, Switzerland), to exchange on a reciprocal basis delegations of scientists, journalists, and medical staff with China. According to American considerations this would allow to "keep the door open" for further steps on the path of normalization of relations between the two countries. Overall the

political maneuvering of the United States had not brought any substantial results at this stage, since the key questions dividing the two countries remained unresolved.

To a certain degree Nixon has elaborated on his ideas about relations with China already during his campaign for the presidency. Nixon admits that the search for ways of rapprochement with China constitutes an extremely difficult problem, not only because the relations between the two countries had reached a dead end but also as a result of the Sino-Soviet conflict. This “sensitivity” consists in the American search for reliable leverage, which in view of the factual tensions in Sino-Soviet relations could be used to exercise pressure on the Soviet Union. This matches the goals Beijing is pursuing today.

Nixon said that “the policy vis-à-vis China” has gained increasing importance after the split between Communist China and the Soviet Union. During the first months after the Republican had taken power, confirmation of the old line and lack of any initiative by Nixon towards China was characteristic. At the press conference on 27 January 1969 (it was Nixon’s first press conference as president), as well as in other talks, the American President stated that conditions for considerable changes in the relations between the two countries had not yet matured, and that these relations can only be based on the demonstration of American military potential in Asia.

Though both sides had been trying to show mutual signs of “good will” in previous years these had been only single steps. Thus it was the French Ambassador in China who informed the Chinese leadership, on the request of the Americans, that American forces will not attack Chinese territory. This declaration was received with satisfaction by Beijing. Beijing stated for its part that the Chinese army will not embark on any action outside its borders, as long as there will be no attack on China. This revelation by the Maoists offered the Americans freedom of action and constituted a major factor for the growing escalation of the American aggression in Vietnam.

Nixon spoke in favor of a continuing policy of “show of force” towards China. However, at the same time he stood up for avoiding a military conflict with the Chinese army by all means. According to Nixon, a dialogue between the two countries could only play out after the United States had successfully demonstrated their military potential. “I think”, the President declared, “that this (i.e. the start of the dialogue) could happen in the 1970s, and I do think that it has to happen.”

Since mid-1969, the Nixon administration has demonstrated more activities and flexibility in the search for ways of rapprochement towards China. Development of these tendencies has contributed to a large extent to the aggravation of Sino-Soviet relations that experienced a peak during the armed provocation by the Maoists at the Sino-Soviet border.

Analysis of results from the 9th Party Congress of the PCC offered to American politicians the conclusion that Beijing is going to follow a new, and tougher, anti-Soviet line designed to stay in place over a long term. Thus there would be options for the U.S. to normalize their relations with China. Shortly after the end of the Party Congress, Secretary of State Rogers noticed that the meeting had labeled the Soviet Union, and not the United States, as the main enemy Number One.

The meeting between Kosygin and Zhou Enlai and the agreement by both sides to conduct negotiations between government delegations on border regulations came unexpected for Washington, and apparently as

a disappointment. Thus important and vexing questions came up for the American government: Is this perhaps the beginning of a normalization of relations between the USSR and China, and, if so, how far is it going to go? How can a potential reconciliation between both “Communist giants” be prevented?

It was Beijing itself helping out the Americans to answer these questions in a sense favorable to them. In addition, voices in America became ever more persistent in demanding efforts to normalize the relations between Washington and Beijing, in analogy to efforts by the Soviet Union. “The U.S. should have follow Moscow’s example with good reason and improve the relations with China as soon as possible”, wrote the ‘New York Times’ on 9 October the same year in its support of above mentioned positions. Steps towards Chinese-American rapprochement even accelerated. In the 2nd half of 1969, the U.S. government announced the easing of travel restrictions for certain categories of American citizens to China and, at the end of the same year, the lifting of the trade embargo with China. By the way, all these measures were implemented unilaterally and were not, unlike in previous years, based on reciprocity. In his New Year’s speech of 1970, Zhou himself for the first time declared unequivocally, like a gesture towards Washington, that the PRC desires to establish relations with all countries “on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence”.

In January 1970, Chinese-American ambassadorial talks resumed in Warsaw. When a major battle erupted at the Vietnamese-Laotian border in February 1971, the Americans again informed Beijing’s leaders about the limited character of this campaign. They, the Americans, would not intend to move towards the Chinese border, or cross it. The following steps of Chinese-American rapprochement at the beginning of this year are familiar to us, and obviously there is no need to go into more details at this point. Basic principles of long-term U.S. policy concerning the Chinese question had been laid down in Nixon’s message to Congress in early 1970. It confirmed how China “must not remain isolated from the outside world” and that the U.S. will strive to develop relations permitting “to enter into new relations favorable to both sides”.

When talking about Washington’s recent activities to establish relations with the PRC, one must admit that they are of limited and symbolic character. They do not touch both countries’ main problems, namely Taiwan and the recognition of the Beijing government’s legitimacy to rule all of China etc. Although China’s admission to the UN and the expulsion of Jiang Jieshi’s representatives have decreased the tensions in Sino-American relations caused until then by the Taiwanese problem, this does not yet yield an eventual solution for this problem.

What are the perspectives for relations between the U.S. and the PRC in the 1970s? Let’s look primarily at the Americans. Assessing these perspectives, above mentioned Professor Barnett sees major problems in the relations between both countries. “Changing our relationship with China”, says Barnett, “will be in all likelihood a difficult and tedious process. We have to overcome the deeply-rooted Chinese hostility and suspicion. Furthermore we must take into consideration the impact of our moves on other countries in the region. We have to avoid Moscow becoming nervous [...]” (In the light of the upcoming Nixon visit to Moscow this concern of the American China expert seems to be more than logical).

Well-known Senator Javits also warned the U.S. government not to show “false optimism” with regard to the route of normalizing American-Chinese relations in the 1970s. He said: “Decades of reconsideration and rethinking on both sides lie ahead. Viewing the course of events [...] conditions have to be created for developing a new type of Chinese-American relations based on mutual respect, normal relations and avoidance of military confrontation”. Though Javits advises the U.S. government to provide China with

economic aid, he remains at the same time doubtful whether the U.S. will have much success in this respect. According to his opinion, “Chinese suspicions and thinking in terms of national pride” will result in Beijing’s clear rejection of any direct American aid offers. Some Western diplomats here [in Beijing] share this skepticism as well.

What are the main goals, tasks and perspectives of the current Chinese-American rapprochement in the light of Nixon’s upcoming visit to Beijing? In the opinion of the progressive world public, which is also shared by the Vietnamese friends, it is Nixon’s strategic goal to search for opportunities to deepen the division within the socialist camp. In the words of the Vietnamese, Nixon stands today between Vietnam and China, and between the USSR and Vietnam, and attempts to divide them. This course by Washington is objectively matched by the position of the current Beijing leadership.

Existing ideological and political differences prove that currently there can be no negotiations between the U.S. and the PRC that would consist of a positive contribution towards peace and détente. This means, that the forthcoming dialogue between Nixon and Beijing desires to achieve goals representing the interests of one or the other side. Taking into account that one side is an imperialist power, the enemy of peoples fighting for their freedom and independence, and the other side holds anti-socialist and dividing positions. Therefore the plot China-USA will mainly be at the expense of the Soviet Union, the socialist countries, and the countries of Indochina and whole Southeast Asia.

From its perspective, Beijing will apparently strive to strike a deal with President Nixon to achieve an eventual liquidation of the consequences of a course of China’s “encirclement and containment”, initiated still under Dulles, through the withdrawal of American forces from Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Moreover it will search for a base to divide up the Chinese and American sphere of influence in Southeast Asia and in the Far East. It seems to us, that the Chinese might assume an U.S. presence in the region constitutes a lesser evil compared to the presence of the Japanese.

Furthermore, questions of Southeast Asia’s neutralization and chances for the signing of a non-aggression pact between the PRC and the U.S. might be issues of the dialogue. According to the Japanese news agency Kyodo, during a meeting with a delegation of Japanese trade unions in Beijing this January Zhou had proposed a treaty on mutual nuclear non-aggression after the normalization of Japanese-Chinese relations. Apparently this would meet the interests of the U.S. and China which both don’t want to accept the nuclear armament of Japan.

According to numerous statements by representatives of both countries concerning the agenda of the upcoming negotiations between the leaders of the USA and China, they might discuss problems of bilateral relations, especially Taiwan, and, in addition, probably Indochina, the Korean peninsula, the relationship with Japan etc. This can be inferred from Zhou Enlai’s statements (see his interview with [James] Reston [from the ‘New York Times’] of 5 August 1971), and assessments by Japanese experts on China and by Western observers. On those questions the U.S. has to make concessions towards China in reciprocity with respective guarantees from Beijing’s side.

Talking about the Taiwan problem, one has to mention that on one hand the Chinese continuously demand the withdrawal of American troops from the island. On the other hand, the Americans know by themselves that Taiwan is no longer of strategic importance to the security of the U.S. in Asia. “High-ranking military

officials”, wrote the ‘New York Times’ on 16 August 1971, “hold the opinion that it will not bear catastrophic consequences for the U.S., if political decisions might require a withdrawal from Taiwan on which Beijing is insisting”.

Even if the USA would withdraw their forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait, one can assume that Beijing would not risk costly attempts to liberate the island by force. It might prefer to wait until the “fruit is ripe and falls into their lap”, even more so since in the adverse scenario, according to the opinion of Swedish Ambassador Bjoernberg, a “Bangladesh situation” might occur. Probably there will be no serious movement towards the solution of the Taiwanese question until the death of Jiang Jieshi. Japan’s major interest in Taiwan has also to be taken into consideration. If the Japanese, however, are really interested in the normalization of relations with the PRC, they will hardly exchange the loss of these perspectives with the maintaining of their current relations with a Taiwan which future is still very unclear.

With regard to the Indochinese problems, the Chinese will in the course of this discussion (there is apparently no doubt that this question will be discussed) during the Chinese-American summit hardly go for any agreement with Nixon behind Vietnam’s back. After the failure of China’s policy on the Indian sub-continent, what had extensively damaged China’s reputation in the countries of the ‘Third World’, Beijing would hardly compromise itself through any agreement with the Americans on Indochina. Otherwise there would be a heated negative response in those developing countries suffering under American rule, and on which the Maoists today bet their hopes to achieve their hegemonic aspirations in the global arena. According to French Ambassador Manach, Zhou explained to him that the solution of the Indochina problem would be a matter of the Indochinese peoples and the Americans. The Prime Minister added that such was it told to Kissinger, and will also be told to Nixon.

According to information available one can also conclude, that during the negotiations between the Chinese leadership and President Nixon the Chinese-American economic relations will be discussed as well. Insufficient concrete data on this matter do not allow defining the exact frame of the forthcoming discussions. An analysis of objectively essential and decisive factors, like the status of the economy and foreign trade of the PRC, the economic policy of the Chinese leadership, the character of political relations between the PRC and the U.S., the position of American businesses on economic cooperation with China etc., offers the chance to define with relative certainty likely tendencies in this area, and to raise assumptions on the future perspectives of Chinese-American economic cooperation.

From the perspective of economic factors, China is in principle very much interested in a substantial development of economic relations with the U.S. The status of China’s economy is such that a speedy development is impossible without active foreign economic cooperation (delivery of complete equipment, permission to share scientific-technological information, using the most advanced technological experiences etc.). Due to its anti-socialist position, the Chinese leadership is looking for economic support among capitalist countries.

In part the development of economic relations between the PRC and the USA might come along with an increase of the foreign trade volume (provided respective preconditions are met). In 1970 the volume was 3.5 million \$ altogether. For 1971 an irrelevant increase is to be expected. The status of the PRC’s foreign trade, and in particular the limits of its export capabilities, do not offer the option of a rapid development of the country by way of foreign trade streams. According to optimistic calculations by American economists, even

under most favorable conditions the volume of Chinese-American trade might hardly exceed 200 million \$ until 1975. Even in this scenario the Chinese probably would have to limit trade with their traditional partners. A real chance for a substantial development of Chinese-American economic relations could only materialize along the lines of investments of American capital in one or another form into certain sectors of the PRC's economy. Political circumstances, however, will hardly allow Chinese leaders to embrace this option swiftly and transparently.

On the other hand it would apparently be desirable from the perspective of American interests to bolster political rapprochement with the development of economic relations. Thus in the long run one might acquire economic leverage to gain influence on Beijing. But in case of economic investments in China, the U.S. government itself would first have to be convinced of the reliability and durability of Chinese rapprochement towards the Americans, and secondly to stimulate the interest of American businesses for such an economic cooperation. This takes time and accordingly structured approach. Taking into consideration what had been just said, one might assume that a gradual and tedious process of initiating Chinese-American economic cooperation is about to be launched.

After a political decision has been reached, in all likelihood both sides will take the first step in this process during the forthcoming meeting: creating a mechanism of contacts for the study of the potential to develop economic relations, discussing, and possibly solving, the question of more favorable conditions to the development of mutual trade, and exchanging opinions with respect to more complicated types of economic cooperation.

Recently the American and, in particular, the Chinese side apparently did not hold particular high hopes for the forthcoming meeting, though their interest in that is still persisting. As far as the Chinese are concerned, they were clearly disappointed when Nixon announced that he is going to visit Moscow in May 1972. It is evident for Beijing that Nixon will be forced to be more vigilant in his talks with the Chinese, having his forthcoming meeting with Moscow permanently in mind. He will probably not fulfill all the hopes the Maoists have held in conjunction with his visit (exertion of pressure towards the USSR). There is an impression that both partners apparently have already harvested the fruits for which the American-Chinese meeting had been organized: In October last year Beijing acquired its seat in the UN, and Nixon will probably be reelected as U.S. President in November this year.

Beijing's diplomatic corps holds views that the necessity of the Nixon visit in Beijing is now apparently less evident than last summer. At the same time it cannot be excluded that the Chinese will make efforts during the talks with the American President to receive certain assurances on the reduction of U.S. hostilities towards China. So they could be convinced that the "American Front" would be calm for their fight with the Soviet Union. From all that it can be concluded that there can hardly be any major definite results expected from the Nixon visit in Beijing. Rather they will proclaim after the visit that negotiations were useful, both sides had discussed questions of mutual interests and bilateral consultations will be continued.

How far the Maoists will proceed on the path of rapprochement with the Americans in terms of joint action against the USSR and the socialist countries, and against their influence and authority, depends on a number of factors. Mostly it hinges on the position of the Americans, who, at least publicly, have repeatedly declared that they do not intend to expand their relations with the PRC at the expense of Soviet-American relations. Possibly the Chinese leadership has to take into account the suspicions which Sino-American contacts evoke

with China's closer friends. Apparently even among Beijing's leaders themselves there is no unanimity on the questions of relations with the U.S. Many external indicators not only show the different approaches, but also the struggle between various groups. Excesses of the "Cultural Revolution" and of the hyperbolic Mao cult are eliminated: On one side Beijing wants to present itself to Nixon in a renewed fashion in order not to deter the dear visitor. On the other side there is an increase to be noticed of anti-American propaganda in press, radio, television and the movies. These are crucial symptoms. One cannot just brush them over but must analyze them thoroughly.

[Translation for CWIHP from East German Archives by Karen Riechert]