

May 25, 1974

Meeting between Chairman Mao Tse-Tung [Mao Zedong] and Mr. Heath, Saturday, 25 May, 1974, approximately 1.15-2.45pm

Citation:

"Meeting between Chairman Mao Tse-Tung [Mao Zedong] and Mr. Heath, Saturday, 25 May, 1974, approximately 1.15-2.45pm", May 25, 1974, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Visit of Edward Heath MP, leader of Conservative Party, to China, 21 May - 2 June 1974, FC 21/1240, National Archives, Kew. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/118070>

Summary:

U.K. Prime Minister Edward Heath and Chairman Mao discussed the following topics: U.S.-Soviet relations, Watergate, Chinese-U.S. relations, U.S. bases in Asia, a united Europe, Sino-Soviet relations, British-Soviet relations, and British-Chinese relations.

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Contents:

Transcript - English

MEETING BETWEEN CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG AND MR. HEATH

Saturday, 25 May, 1974, approximately 1.15 - 2.45 pm

□The following were present, reading from left to right of the horseshoe:-

□Vice Foreign Minister Ch'iao Kuan-hua

□Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau Hung-Wen

□Premier Chou En-lai

□Sir John Addis

□Mr. Heath

□Chairman Mao Tse-tung

□Assistant Foreign Minister Weng Hai-jung

□□(on a small seat behind the Chairman's right shoulder)

□Miss Tang Wen-sheng

□Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing

□Miss Chang Han-chih

1. □After the presentation of the members of Mr. Heath's party and after photographs, the Chairman said "I am sick (or diseased) all over my body". Chou said "I am sick too".

2. □Mr. Heath expressed gratitude for his reception in Peking. There was some discussion about the welcoming crowds. Mao said that there had not been a guard of honour for Mr. Heath's arrival. He thought that for the departure there should be a guard of honour.

Sino/US Relations

3. □Mao asked Mr. Heath if he thought President Nixon could resist the Watergate affair. In the discussion on this point Mao's consistent line was that the simply did not understand why Nixon had not cut the affair short at the beginning.

4. □Mr. Heath asked if Mao thought that the weakening of Nixon's position inside the US affected the Chinese Government's ability to carry through their policy of improved relations with the US. Mao replied that weakening of the position of the US in the world was not important. □ (In the discussion of Sino-US relations there was no suggestion of any complaint of the Americans carrying out the terms of the Shanghai communique too slowly.)

5. □Mao said that at Kissinger's first visit to Peking, Kissinger thought we was going to be eaten up. At the second visit Kissinger was tense but at the third visit he was more relaxed. He said that he respected Kissinger's capacity.

6. Mao said that the US had over-reached themselves, establishing forward bases in Korea, Japan, "our Taiwan", the Philippines and Indo-China. They were now having to draw back. Mr. Heath said that in establishing these bases the Americans had thought they were containing the world. Mao said that they thought they were containing communism. He could not understand why the Americans were "so afraid of us".

Europe

7. □It was clear from Mao's many and penetrating questions that Europe was very much at the forefront of his mind.

8. □ He said "We want a strong and united Europe".

9. □ He asked Mr. Heath what are the prospects for CSE.

10. □ He asked Mr. Heath if he believed in the possibility of a real détente between the United States and the Soviet Union. He said that he himself did not.

11. □ Mao asked Mr. Heath if he had ever met Adenauer. Mr. Heath said that he had once spent a whole day with him. Mao said that Adenauer was afraid of Soviet domination of Europe.

Sino-Soviet Relations

13. □ Mr. Heath asked Mao if he believed that there was a real danger of a Soviet attack on China. Mao replied that they were not afraid of attack but were taking appropriate precautions. Tunnels were being built under all the great cities. If there were a Soviet attack the people would go underground and would carry on from there. Mr. Heath asked if Mao believed that there was a possibility of a Soviet preemptive nuclear attack to take out the Chinese nuclear capacity. Mao said that nothing could ever be decided by nuclear action.

14. □ Mao said that the Soviet threat was directed against the West, against Europe, not against China. He said that some people in Europe wanted to turn the Soviet Union against China to protect themselves, just as Chamberlain and Daladier had tried to turn Germany against the Soviet Union. Mr. Heath said that he had not supported Chamberlain.

15. □ Mr. Heath asked when the Sino-Soviet rift had started. Chou En-lai said that it was more than ten years ago. Teng Hsiao-p'ing said that it had started in 1956, i.e. with the Soviet 22nd Party Congress. Chou agreed and said that the dispute continued through the Bucharest meeting in 1960, and then in 1964 the breach became complete - so it was a dispute lasting eight years. Mao then said that the rift really began in 1954 for in 1955 Khrushchev had told Adenauer that China was "ferocious". (At the meeting the following day Teng Hsiao-p'ing referring to the same incident, said that Khrushchev had talked to Adenauer about the "yellow peril".) In the course of this discussion Mao challenged Chiao Kuan-hua to make a contribution since it was his special subject. Mao said "We always call him Lord Ch'iao" (using the English word "Lord").

16. □ Mao described the Sino-Soviet rift as a border dispute arising out of (or born of) ideology.

Sino-British Relations

17. □ Mao congratulated Mr. Heath on the fact that it was under his Government that full relations had been established between Britain and China. He said that there are no problems between Britain and China. Hong Kong is a question left over from the past. Mao said that the lease still had many years to run. There was no need to discuss the question for the time being. It was a question for the younger generation to settle - pointing with a sweep of his hand to Wang Hung-wen, Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Chang Han-chih and Teng Hsiao-p'ing, but excluding Chou En-lai. There was some discussion between the Chinese on the date on which the lease expires. Chou said that he always remembered the date of the treaty because it was the year in which he was born. Mr. Heath said that when the lease fell due he would be the same age as Mao is now. (Mao referred to Wan as a member of the children's corps (or was it the youth corps?) Mao said quite late in the discussion that Mr. Heath had told the

Ambassador in London that he would like to meet Wang Hung-wen: that was the reason why he had asked him to partake in the talks.)

18. □ Mao referred to Sir Alec Douglas Home's visit in 1972 as Foreign Secretary. He said that Sir Alec had urged him to restore good relations between China and India. But what could he do? India was not willing. He was sorry that he had not met Sir Alec but he himself was a bureaucrat. Sir Alec had not asked to see him so it had not been possible for him to arrange a meeting. He would have enjoyed meeting him.

19. □ Mao asked after Sir Anthony Eden's health. He said that Eden's position had been much damaged over the Suez affair. Dulles had let Eden down. (While Miss Tang groped for the best idiomatic translation for this phrase Mr. Heath suggested "pulled the rug from under his feet". Mao was delighted with this was translated literally back into Chinese.)

India and Japan

20. □ Mr. Heath asked for Mao's views on Soviet influence in India.

21. □ Mr. Heath asked Mao whether he thought there was a danger of a revival of militarism in Japan. Mao replied that he did not see this danger in the foreseeable future but it might emerge eventually.

22. □ Towards the end of the meeting Mao said, as he said to Edgar Snow in October, 1970, "I have an invitation from God. He has asked me to visit him". Mr. Heath said that he hoped Mao would not accept the invitation for some time. Mao said "I have not yet replied" and threw himself back in his chair laugh-ing uproariously.