

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with People's Republic of China
Foreign Minister Qian Qichen (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and
Deputy for National Security Affairs
Richard H. Solomon, Assistant Secretary of State
for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
James R. Lilley, U.S. Ambassador to the PRC
Douglas Paal, Director, Asian Affairs, NSC Staff
James Brown, Interpreter

Qian Qichen, Foreign Minister
Zhu Qizhen, Ambassador to the U.S.
Zhang Yijun, MFA, Director, Americas Division
Shen Guofang, Secretary to the Foreign Minister
Lu Shumin, MFA
Tian Junting, MFA
Gao Shumao, MFA
Ma Xuesong, Interpreter

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: November 30, 1990, 1:44 - 2:20 p.m. EST
Cabinet Room

(The President accepted two questions from the media during the photo op preceding the meeting.) (U)

Reporter: Mr. President, has China atoned for Tiananmen Square?
(U)

The President: Have they what? (U)

Reporter: Have they atoned for Tiananmen Square? (U)

The President: Well, I think the Chinese government knows that we have some differences on this whole broad question of human

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rights, but we have many things in common. And one good thing is we have a very frank relationship with this Foreign Minister and an ability to discuss things openly. He's got some problems with some things, perhaps, we have done and in this area there are some differences. But that's one of the purposes of this kind of meeting -- is to reduce these differences and go forward. (U)

Reporter: Are you thinking of eliminating sanctions? (U)

The President: We are going to discuss a wide array of questions, and I think it will go very well. And I -- as I say, both sides are trying to strengthen and build on this relationship that both recognize as important. And I will have every opportunity to express to the Foreign Minister, and I expect that he will report that back very accurately to the leaders in Beijing, how strongly I feel on some of these questions. And he will have every opportunity today to present China's views on these important questions. (U)

I am always inclined to emphasize the positive. And there are many positive and very important aspects to this relationship -- very important. And not the least of which is that China and the United States have made common ground in terms of standing up against aggression. And that is important to every American; it is important, I think, to the Chinese side as well. (U)

Mr. Fitzwater: Lights. Thank you. (U)

The President: Thank you, guys. It's been a great pleasure. (Laughter) (U)

How many brave souls are going to South America? All right. Rest up. (U)

I am taking a trip to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Venezuela. (U)

Foreign Minister Qian: A long trip. (U)

The President: I should not tell you and Jim Baker about long trips. I am glad this visit got sorted out. To get it out of the way right away... I did feel very disappointed about your abstention in the UN vote. But Jim explained to me the Chinese position. I meant what I said here. I am disappointed. But I am pleased that the resolution became active. When I told her (the reporter) that I wanted to emphasize the positive, that is what I meant. I want to stay together on the Gulf crisis despite that thing that occurred yesterday. (S)

I hope you understand that the President understands the importance of this relationship and wants it strengthened. The vote last night would have been helpful to me in that regard.

will not go on in detail on the reasons we strongly supported that resolution, but I strongly believe that is what we need to get Saddam Hussein to do now what he should have done long ago, that is, get out of Kuwait. (S)

Let me say I understand your concern about US forces in the Gulf. Let me tell you that I want every single one of those soldiers back home as soon as possible -- and I told that to Iraq this morning. I have more points on the Gulf, and I know that you had a good conversation with Jim Baker this morning. I will spare you. I want to hear from you on what divides us and on what unites us. Then, I will have one or two points. (S)

Foreign Minister Qian: First, Mr. President, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. Before I left Beijing, all the Chinese leaders asked me to convey their greetings and good wishes to you. I am very glad I have had the opportunity to visit Washington. I attach great importance to this visit. We all hope to see the visit as an opportunity to return US-China relations to full development. (S)

On the issue of the Gulf crisis, there is good cooperation between China and the US. China voted for ten successive resolutions. In the vote yesterday, China abstained. Just now, Mr. President, you expressed disappointment. We fully understand your disappointment. Indeed, it was very difficult for China to arrive at the decision to abstain. After repeated consultations, we concluded that even if China abstains, the resolution would be approved. (S)

Among the Permanent Five of the UN Security Council, and indeed among the fifteen Security Council members, I am the only Foreign Minister to visit Iraq and talk with Saddam Hussein. I had a one hour talk with Saddam Hussein. I strongly conveyed to him the international condemnation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Not a single nation could approve his action. I also made clear to him the position of the Chinese government. The only option is to withdraw from Kuwait and make peace there. (S)

I also told him that if war breaks out, for the US and the other nations it is only a question of how much cost will be paid. For Iraq, it will be a matter of life or death. So I think that there is no difference between China and the United States on urging Iraq out of Kuwait and reaching a settlement. Today, during our talks, Secretary Baker told me you are announcing new measures, with the Iraqi Foreign Minister coming to Washington and Secretary Baker to Baghdad. (S)

The President: It is all positive, unless he thinks we are making some concessions. So I have been on the phone to Ozal, the Emir, King Fahd to tell them we are not going to make compromises. (S)

Foreign Minister Qian: In the future, there will be many matters where China-US cooperation is essential, particularly many major foreign affairs issues. Because China and the US find themselves in different circumstances, there may be differences in the approach or methods they take. But, still I believe that we have a common interest in world peace. (S)

The President: Exactly. May I have a chance to bring up some bilateral questions? I am very glad I had the chance to tell the press how we are working together. I feel funny starting this conversation in this way. I have worked very hard in this country, as we have looked at Tiananmen, to hold this country together. As I lived in China, please understand that I know how China views other countries involving themselves in China's affairs. I understand. But I ask that you also understand how what happened harmed our efforts to keep things together. For us, human rights are codified in our international outlook, for example in Helsinki. To be frank, this is the key area troubling our relations. (S)

Let me say I am not without appreciation for what China has done, and I cite cooperation on the Fang Lizhi case. It was not an easy decision, and I appreciate that. Similarly, you should understand that renewing MFN, on our side, was not an easy decision, because all I got was a firestorm of criticism. (S)

Now, we have been talking about mutual steps we can take together. I have just a few remarks. In the spirit of frankness, let me raise a few points. We want to see release of the prisoners since Tiananmen, an accounting of the prisoners and killed, and -- where do we stand on the jamming of VOA? (S)

General Scowcroft: Still jamming. (U)

The President: I just want you to understand where we stand. The recent reports of dissidents to be tried for sedition are causing another groundswell of concern and will start a new round of criticism within the United States. I just hope there will be no such setback, and that those steps will be taken. I can assure you that there will be a strong effort here and we will take steps. (S)

Jim tells me you have got a 2:30 appointment on the Hill. I would like to get your views. This relationship is too darned important to allow it to languish. I want it to improve and I am willing to go the extra mile. (S)

Foreign Minister Qian: I think that you see recently both sides have done a great deal for improving relations. Both sides have made great progress. On the issue of human rights, we may differ in our views. But, I think we can get to know each other better

through increased contacts. If there are just differences of opinion with no contacts, then the differences will continue to increase. Both sides make judgments on the information passed by the press, which may be true or may be false. (S)

Therefore, in my talks with Secretary Baker today, we decided on an exchange of visits, and several under secretaries and assistant secretaries will be going to China. Actually, this visit to Washington is for this purpose. Also, Mr. President, I hope you will agree that Secretary Baker will visit when time is available. China is the only country Secretary Baker has not visited. (S)

The President: Try to help us. Take this message to your leadership: Try to help us, on human rights, proliferation. If you can help us, we can move forward. I have never met Jiang Zemin; I would like to meet him. We really must see more progress. I do not want a visit of the President, because it will set things back. I want to make clear to you, whom I respect, we have got to sit down with Jiang Zemin and work things out. But if I sit down with him, there will just be controversy. Let us get our ambassadors and ministers together to work out mutual efforts on specific points. (S)

Foreign Minister Qian: On some of the President's reports, these are biased and unfair. In China, there were similar reports that General Scowcroft's visit was intended to carve up China. (S)

The President: Nobody will believe it here. (S)

Foreign Minister Qian: Nobody will believe it here, but that is in the press. (S)

The President: I will tell you how this visit will be portrayed. George Bush, because of his concern for relations with China, put aside concerns over human rights and freedoms. (S)

Secretary Baker: Notwithstanding China's abstention. (S)

The President: Yes, they will point to negative things. I hope you feel welcome, because you are. Let us vow together to make this Ambassador's (pointing to Ambassador Zhu) job a little easier. (S)

Ambassador Lilley: Not me too, sir? (S)

The President: Both ambassadors. Please send greetings to Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and the other leaders, Li Peng and Yang Shangkun -- he had a good visit here. Ask them to look at how they can help us. (S)

-- End of Conversation --