

Hello everybody and welcome again to another episode of Presidential Archives Uncovered--the podcast that brings to you cool clips from the collections of the Presidential Libraries of the U.S. National Archives. I hope everybody is enjoying listening to these podcasts as much as I am having fun making them. Today we have another clip from the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, and this clip as well as the documents I discuss can be found on the Presidential Timeline, www.presidentialtimeline.org.

On July 15, 1971, President Nixon announced to the nation that the People's Republic of China had invited him to visit, and he had accepted. He also stated that Henry Kissinger, who was Assistant for National Security Affairs, had made a secret trip to Peking in order to plan for the visit. His announcement resulted in strong public reactions for and against the President's planned trip.

Kirk Douglas wrote, "Your announcement last night of your impending visit to the People's Republic of China was a giant step forward not only toward peace in Vietnam but global peace."

Maryann Grelinger's telegram to the President was less supportive. She wrote, "Have fun in Red China. Hope they keep you."

In the following two excerpts, Nixon explains his rationale for the visit.

656-10 Excerpt 1 (1:24)

January 26, 1972

RN, Barend Biesheuvel, Alexander Haig, and J. William Middendorf

RN: Uh, we do believe that by starting the long process of some sort of contact, there will--I will say, obviously, it will not come to recognition on our part—

BB: No.

RN: --because it cannot, since we still recognize Taiwan and will continue to honor our treaty commitments. They know this will not come out. What may come out of it will be, uh, however, uh, uh, some method of communication in the future, uh, some contact in the future, uh, and perhaps reducing the chance in the immediate future of a confrontation between the United States and the PRC in Asia, such as we had in Korea, and such as we had indirectly in Vietnam. And looking further in the future, uh, when they become a super power, a nuclear super power, uh, to be in a position that at that time, uh, we will have such relations with them that, uh, we, uh, can discuss differences and, and not inevitably have a clash. Now, also, no one can look at Asia, uh, and take 750 million Chinese out of it and say you can have any policy in the Pacific that will succeed in preventing war without having the Chinese a part of it. It's just as cold-blooded as that.

656-10 Excerpt 2 (1:02)

January 26, 1972

RN, Barend Biesheuvel, Alexander Haig, and J. William Middendorf

RN: We will discuss a lot of things. We will discuss their role in the Pacific and our role in the Pacific. We will disagree on a lot of things. But the most important thing about that visit is that it occurs, and that the Chinese and the United States will have begun a process of, shall we say, getting to know each other. Now, this is not said in any sense of sentimentality. There are many people who—who have looked at the China visit and and interpreted it exactly the wrong way. Uh, they say “oh, this is great-the- now the United States and China, really never had any differences—

BB: Uh-huh.

RN: --everything's going to be settled.” It's not that. Uh, no one in this world knows how great the gulf is between their philosophy and ours, their interests and ours. Uh, but also no one in this world, I think, knows better than I do, how imperative it is to see that great nations that have enormous differences, uh, where you've got the nuclear thing hanging in the balance, have got to find ways to, you know, talk, get along.