Chapter IV

THE PROCESS OF APPRECIATION, 1966-70
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The Process of Rapprochement, 1965-70

The process of rapprochement in Sino-US relations came about in two major phases. During the first phase, which began early in 1960, there was a gradual decline of mutual suspicion and hostility. Victory had elapsed the United States in Vietnam, and the US public was disenchanted with the war. The US Senate debated the Vietnam and China policies of the Government and found that the premises on which they were based were no longer worthy of general acceptance. There was also an increasing demand by the American public for a rapprochement with China. The second phase of the rapprochement began late in 1968 and lasted till the end of 1976. During this phase the United States took several concrete steps in the direction of improvement of relations. China, less suspicious than before, reciprocated, though in a subtle way.

Some observers of the China scene believe that the danger of an attack by the Soviet Union was primarily behind China's decision to seek a rapprochement with the United States. While the compulsions of the Sino-Soviet schism cannot be underestimated, there were other factors, too, for the shift in Sino-US relations in the direction of a rapprochement. Some of these factors were: (1) the US desire to improve relations with China, (2) the ending of the Cultural Revolution in China, and (3) better appreciation of each other's perspectives. Thus, it was not just the negative factor of anti-Sovietism on the part of China, important though it was, that brought about a rapprochement in Sino-US relations.
The process of rapprochement took a fairly long time to run its full course. Meanwhile important changes took place in the bilateral relations of China and the United States as well as in the global environment. There was nothing sudden or dramatic about the whole process of developments which led finally to the rapprochement, even though the actual announcement subsequently of the Nixon visit imparted a dramatic element in it. When the process started, the Chinese leadership had perhaps not yet fully made up its mind to change its policy towards the United States. In spite of all the compulsions to improve relations, there was no breakthrough till 1971.

US Attempts at a New China Policy

The prohibitive costs of the Vietnam war and the mounting apprehension in the general public regarding the possibility of a direct war with China led the Senate Foreign Relations Committee headed by Senator William Fulbright to call upon US experts on China to testify before it. The purpose of the hearings was to enlighten the Senate and the US public regarding the China policy of the United States. Since the testimonies given by the experts softened the stand of the US Administration and helped in initiating a process of policy changes in regard to China, it is worthwhile to highlight the Senate hearings and the debate in the US Congress which followed.

Experts on China dealt with various aspects of Sino-US relations. They gave their views on China's history and culture, its political system, and its economic and military capability. They also discussed whether China posed a danger and submitted
their assessments of the nature of China's involvement in Vietnam. There were wide differences among them about many of the questions that were considered, but a majority of them endorsed the suggestion that the United States should increase its contacts and communication with China in order to avert a war with it and to moderate Chinese extremism.

In his testimony, a senior China specialist, A. Doak Barnett, observed that the US policy of isolating China in order to contain it had failed. He, therefore, suggested a policy of containment without isolation, a policy "that would aim, on the one hand, at checking military and subversive threats and pressures emanating from Peking" and, on the other, at bringing about "maximum contacts with and maximum involvement of the Chinese communists in the international community". He did not rule out the possibility of US efforts at increasing contacts with China being rebuffed, but said that the United States should nevertheless pursue the long-term goal of moderating the Chinese stand.

John K. Fairbank gave his own analysis of Chinese history, and said that the Maoist model had similarities with that of his predecessors in Peking. Dealing with the specific problem of the Vietnam war, he argued that as the United States was neither winning nor losing in Vietnam, the alternative to war would be to

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2 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

3 Ibid., p. 98-107.
underwrite a non-Communist model of nation-building in Asia on
the one hand and dampen Peking’s militancy by increased contacts
with it on the other.

Donald S. Zagoria pleaded for policy changes on the lines
suggested by A. Doak Barnett and John K. Fairbank. He argued
that although China had isolated itself by its own actions and had
met with failure, it had retained with it sufficient flexibility
to change the policies which had brought about its isolation.

Most experts suggested changes in the China policy on
various grounds. One of the arguments advanced in this context was
that Communist China was no passing phenomenon and that it had a
Government with which the United States would be bound to do busi-
ness sooner or later. Dealing with the economic situation in
China, Alexander Eckstein said that after a period of setbacks,
China was recovering. He had no doubt that the Communist regime
was stable. It was, therefore, necessary, according to him, that
the United States should prepare itself to deal with it. He said
that the trade embargo on China should be lifted as it had proved
unavailing and China had been able to obtain the goods it needed
from other countries. John M. B. Lindebeck analyzed the politic-1

4 Ibid., p. 160.
5 Ibid., pp. 368-73.
6 A. Doak Barnett argues: "...the regime is not a passing
phenomenon. In time, it may change its character, but
it will continue to exist, as we will continue to have to
deal with it, for the predictable future". Ibid., p. 8.
7 Ibid., pp. 360-5. As regards the lifting of the embargo,
Eckstein said: "removal of embargo may be peculiarly well

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situation in China. He felt that the Chinese leaders were pre-
occupied with domestic issues, and he, therefore, disagreed with
the view that China was spending much of its time in promoting
revolutions around the world.

China's military capability was another important subject
that was analyzed. In view of the common feeling in the United
States that China was aggressive and expansionist, General Samuel
H. Griffith II felt that Lin Piao's concept of "people's war"
needed re-examination in the light of the military constraints on
China. According to Morton H. Halperin, the American bombing
of North Vietnam had led the Chinese to believe in the "substantial
probability of an American attack on China growing out of the
Vietnam war". Halperin added that the Chinese feared the damage
that the United States could cause to their nuclear installations
and they, therefore, determined not to provoke the United
States. He suggested that the United States should prevent the
Vietcong from winning a military victory. At the same time he
wanted the United States to assure China that it was not looking;

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suited to serve as the first step on the road to
normalization between the United States and China. It
can be initiated internally without resort to negotia-
tions, and it can be implemented without any economic
cost". Ibid., p. 337.

8 Ibid., p. 186.

9 Though he had necessarily to be speculative, he held that
the People's Liberation Army could not move beyond immediate
peripheral areas. China emphasized the air defense
aspect. Nuclear power was still in an embryonic form.
Ibid., pp. 272-3.
for an opportunity to destroy China’s nuclear capability.

According to Robert S. Scalapino a policy of containment by isolation was inadequate from the standpoint of international political realities. He argued that such a policy had robbed the United States of initiative and leverage, isolated it from its allies making it vastly difficult collective thinking and action with respect to China. At the same time it became difficult to put multiple external pressures to curb Chinese extremism in foreign policy.

Hans J. Morgenthau observed in his testimony that the policy of peripheral military containment of China had failed and that isolation was irrelevant for the purpose of containment. He also saw the danger of the policy of peripheral military containment leading to a war with China. In his view, as China expanded its power and influence by political rather than by military means, it was necessary to strengthen the nations of Asia politically, socially, and economically. He added that the ultimate instrument of containment applied to the USSR should be applied to China too and that China should be warned that if it ever embarked on a policy of Asian and world conquest, it would surely be at war with the United States.

The above experts thus more or less emphasized the need for policy changes, directly or implicitly, in regard to China.

10 Ibid., pp. 284-7.
11 Ibid., p. 570.
12 Ibid., pp. 556-61.
However, some experts gave testimonies in which they vigorously criticized the premises of the other experts and the changes suggested in the China policy of the United States. Po. Walter Judd declared that the Chinese Communist regime did not represent the will of the people of China and was advocating violence. He was, therefore, convinced that the United States would lose rather than gain by changing its policy of isolating China. Though slightly less forthright in criticizing China, George E. Taylor too held that the Communist regime was in trouble and that the United States should do nothing that might facilitate its becoming a Great Power. Professor David E. Lowe criticized all the main arguments advanced during the earlier Senate hearings in favour of a soft approach towards China.

In the light of the testimonies given by the experts there was further debate in the Senate. Most Senators said that the United States should soften its China policy somewhat but without giving the impression of doing so from weakness or timidity. Others felt that the China policy of the United States was based on a number of misconceptions regarding China. Senator Joseph S. Clark (Democrat, Philadelphia, Pa) argued that as China was preoccupied with domestic problems, it had "no real stomach for

13 Ibid., pp. 437-47.
14 Ibid., pp. 452-9.
15 Ibid., pp. 496-507.
16 See, for example, Senator Stephen H. Young's (Democrat, Ohio) argument, Congressional Record, vol. 112, pt. 8, 5 May 1966, p. 9835.
military adventures abroad". In Senator Edward Kennedy's (Democrat, Massachusetts) view China did not pose a military threat of the traditional type. It was the isolation of China which had made China resort to political insurgency and act as a disruptive influence in the economic and political development of its neighbours. China's obsession with anti-communism, according to others, had acted as a "blinding light" and had aggravated Chinese belligerence.

Most Senators argued in support of a moderate stand on the part of the United States. They also made a number of suggestions in the same way as the China experts had done. Senator Stephen K. Young (Democrat, Ohio) suggested even recognition of China to make it less intransigent and more co-operative. A few Senators, including Senator Frank E. Moss (Democrat, Utah) suggested that China should be allowed representation at the United Nations though they recognized that it was too controversial an issue to admit of easy disposal. Other Senators held that a peaceful solution of Asian affairs had become difficult because of the denial of representation to China at the United Nations. And yet others suggested lifting the trade embargo on China and increased contacts through exchange of scholars and journalists between China and the United States.

17 Ibid., pt. 5, 21 March 1960, p. 6418.
19 Ibid., pt. 8, 3 May 1960, p. 9610.
20 Ibid., pt. 3, 5 May 1960, p. 9855.
21 Ibid., pt. 15, 23 August 1960, p. 20325.
Not that there were no champions of the status quo though these were without doubt in a minority. Senator Thruston B. Morton (Republican, Kentucky) said in a speech at the University of Louisville on 18 April 1966 that any recognition of Communist China by the United States would do great damage to the best interests of the United States. In his view, a change of policy by the United States could be a "costly mistake". Senator Jack Robertson (Republican, Iowa) argued that China's admission into the United Nations would not serve the interests of the United States.

Very few differences among the senators, both among experts, regarding the China policy of the United States. Yet, in spite of these differences, it was widely recognized that the Vietnam and China policies of the United States were based on wrong assumptions and that it was necessary to change them. With this recognition, there came about a major change in the perception of the Administration. Thus, in retrospect, the first event to take place in the direction of a rapprochement in Sino-US relations was the debate in the Senate and in the intellectual circles regarding the China policy of the United States. It is also clear that it was the United States which initiated the process of rapprochement.

Unrest on the university campuses around the country highlighted the nationwide dissatisfaction with the Administration's

23 Ibid., pt. 9, 6 June 1966, pp. 12568-9.
Vietnam and China policies. The use of highly destructive weapons like the napalm bomb in Vietnam and the failure to achieve victory on the ground gradually led the youth to rebel. There was protest also against the exorbitant cost of the war and the unconscionable destruction of men and property. Gradually, the folly of the Administration's policy in Vietnam was exposed. Student unrest and the increasing dissatisfaction in intellectual circles regarding the Vietnam war were contributory factors in the Administration's decision to change its policy with regard to Vietnam and China.

Cultural Revolution and China's Foreign Policy

The Cultural Revolution helped in the improvement of Sino-US relations in the long run. China's preoccupation with its own domestic affairs shifted its attention away from the Vietnam war for a considerable time. Also the long-drawn turmoil eventually exercised a moderating influence on China's style of functioning in its foreign affairs.

The struggle within the Foreign Ministry during the Cultural revolution had an important effect on China's foreign relations. It started with the dispatch of work teams by Foreign Minister Chen Yi in June and July 1966. Chen Yi's criticism of the behaviour of the Red Guards put him in trouble. The Red Guards demanded that he should be removed from his post. Finally, on 19 April 1967, he was obliged to buy peace by making self-criticism.

24 See, for detailed discussions, Melvin Curtov, "The Foreign Minister and Foreign Affairs during the Cultural (footnote contd. on the next page)
On 29 May 1967 the Red Guards captured the Foreign Ministry and ran it for some time. They dealt with the foreign missions rather roughly. They went so far as to burn down the US mission. China's relations even with friendly countries like Burma and Cambodia were strained. So uncertain was the situation in China that about the end of 1967 all Chinese Ambassadors except the one accredited to the United Arab Republic were camping in Peking. This meant that there was a state of standstill in the sphere of foreign relations.

During this period the United States made many overtures to China for improving relations. These overtures, however, went unnoticed for obvious reasons. As the domestic situation came under control by early 1968, China became aware of the US willingness to improve relations.

In 1966, when the Cultural Revolution was formally launched, China's concern over the war in Vietnam had markedly declined. With the launching of the Cultural Revolution, China did not play up the threat to its own security as a result of American actions. Such criticism as it made of the United States was more in the nature of propaganda than by way of an honest articulation of an anticipated danger to Chinese security.

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25 See, for example, the Asinhua correspondent's report date: 26 March 1967, in Asinhua Selected News Items (Hong Kong, no. 14, 3 April 1967, pp. 22-23. See also the editorial of 8 August 1967, ibid., no. 34, 21 August 1967, p. 3.
China characterized the appeal for "peace talks" as a fraud. It reiterated that the crux of the issue in Vietnam was not resumption or cessation of US bombing but a complete withdrawal of the United States to enable the people of Vietnam to settle their affairs as they deemed best. A Jan-min Jih-pao editorial on 23 July 1967 held that there was no question of de-escalation in Vietnam so long as the United States was in Vietnam. It asked the United States to withdraw from Vietnam totally and unconditionally. During the Cultural Revolution, China criticized the United States time and again as if it were a ritual that it had a duty to perform. It mounted its tirades with more attention to the acidity of its language than to the content. It rarely focussed on particular events. Even when it did, it did not always relate them to the state of Sino-US relations as it used to do in 1965 or at the time of the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong in 1966. A statement issued on behalf of the Chinese Government on 1 March 1968, during the Tet offensive, criticized US "atrocities", and declared that "the Chinese people wanted to give all-out support to the fraternal Vietnamese people". There was no reference in the statement to China's security. Nor was there any indication as to the possibility of China's involvement.

29 For the Chinese Government statement of 1 March 1968, see Hsinhua Selected News Item, no. 11, 11 March 1968, p. 3.
In a joint editorial published on 19 March 1968 Jen-min Jih-pao and Chiah-fung Chun-pao criticized US policies in rather vague terms, and argued that it was an "internationalist duty" to support the Vietnamese "people's war" against the United States and that China would fight "shoulder to shoulder" with Vietnam to defeat US imperialism. The tone of this editorial was distinctly sober, especially in comparison with the statements that the Peking regime used to issue in 1965 and earlier. At any rate it gave no indication of the possibility of China's involvement in the war. The use of the words "internationalist duty" showed that during the Cultural Revolution China did not regard the Vietnam war as an issue that posed a serious threat to its security. Thus, the Cultural Revolution exercised a moderating effect on Sino-American hostility.

Although it was clear that the United States was having second thoughts on its China policy, China had no time to notice the changes that were coming about in the US stance. There was only one occasion when a Chinese diplomat of some standing deemed it expedient to make a reference, however cautious, to Sino-US relations in terms that would acknowledge possibility of improvement. Speaking on the secret talks between China and the United States in Warsaw, Yang Kuo-chien, the Chinese Ambassador in Warsaw, declared that the US Government was not interested in "easing" Sino-US relations. He charged that far from trying to improve relations, the United States was actually engaged in committing "criminal
hostility" against the Chinese people. He criticized the US military provocations and the continued US occupation of Taiwan. As regards the US role in Vietnam, he cited the US appeal for "peace talks" as an instance of US perfidy. It is now well known that the purpose of this statement was really to rebut the Soviet charge that China and the USA were heading towards a rapprochement. In spite of the caution discernible in the statement, therefore, one cannot take it as a clear description of China's US policy.

Strain in Sino-Soviet Relations and Its Effects on the United States

As we have already noted, the threat of the Soviet Union was undoubtedly a major factor in China's calculations, but it only contributed to, rather than determined, China's US policy.

During the Cultural Revolution, Sino-Soviet relations were strained, at least partly, as a result of China's policies at home. The Cultural Revolution was directed against the emergence of revisionist tendencies, allegedly under Soviet inspiration. The Red Guards denounced revisionism and described as "China's Khrushchev" the man who, they thought, had devised a plan to make China a revisionist country to introduce "Khrushchev revisionism" in China.


"without Khrushchev". This embittered relations between China and the Soviet Union further. China's foreign policy received an unmistakably anti-Soviet orientation. Thus the communique adopted by the Eleventh plenary session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on 12 August 1966 held:

The new leading group of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has inherited Khrushchev's mantle and is practicing Khrushchev revisionism without Khrushchev. Their line is one of safeguarding imperialist and colonialist domination in the capitalist world and restoring capitalism in the socialist world. The leading group of the CPCU has betrayed Marxism-Leninism, betrayed the great Lenin, betrayed the road of the great October revolution, betrayed proletarian internationalism, betrayed the revolutionary cause of the international proletariat and of the oppressed peoples and oppressed nations, and betrayed the interests of the great Soviet people and the people of the socialist countries.... They are uniting with US-led imperialism and the reactionaries of various countries and forming a new holy alliance against communism, the People, Revolution and China. (33)

Dilating on the question of forming "the broadest possible United Front" to fight "US imperialism", the communique said that there would be no room for the Soviet Union in such a movement. It charged that the Soviet Union was engaged in "splittist, disruptive, and subversive activities...in the service of US imperialism". It also took note of what it called "Soviet-US collaboration for world domination". It criticized the USA severely on several counts, though, on the ideological plane, it held that the United States was still the "most ferocious common enemy" of the peoples of the world. Foreign Minister Chen Yi argued that it was imperative

33 JPU Translations from Hung Chii (Hong Kong), no. 35, 23 September 1966, pp. 4-5.
34 ibid., p. 6.
to oppose "modern revisionism" in order to oppose "imperialism". He sought to make a clear distinction between true revolutionaries and modern revisionists.

During the Cultural Revolution, two unpleasant incidents took place relating to the Chinese Embassy in the Soviet Union which added to the hostility in Sino-Soviet relations. On 29 June 1967 the Soviet Government sent a strong protest note to China alleging riotous demonstrations by the Red Guards before the Soviet Embassy in Peking. Tass, which carried the text of the note, charged that there were swearing, slanders, hostile outcries, and threats against the Soviet Embassy in Peking and the Soviet Government. It was also reported later that on 3 February 1967 Russian women and children of the Soviet Embassy in Peking got rough treatment at the hands of Chinese demonstrators. The other incident related to the Chinese Embassy in the Soviet Union. A statement issued on behalf of the Government of China on 3 February 1967 charged that the Soviet Government had directed hooligans to break into the Chinese Embassy in the Soviet Union and savagely beat up Chinese diplomatic representatives and working personnel on 3 February. It said that the


36 Times of India (New Delhi), 31 January 1967.

37 The Times (London), 7 February 1967.
Soviet government had thus offered "an extremely grave provocation" to China. It added that in point of intolerance the Soviet action was worthy of Hitler's Germany. On 10 February, China lodged a formal protest with the Soviet Embassy in Peking. Thus relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated even during the early phase of the Cultural Revolution. This deterioration was accelerated later by the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 and the Sino-Soviet border clashes of late. It is possible that when comparative normalcy was restored in the internal situation in China at the end of the Cultural Revolution the events that had soured Sino-Soviet relations figured in an important way in the hard-headed review of Sino-US relations made by the Chinese leadership. Nothing had happened in Sino-US relations comparable to the events that had affected Sino-Soviet relations.

Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was a major event for Sino-Soviet relations though quite often its impact on China's policy is overstressed. For instance, according to some observers, Beijing apprehended that if the Soviet Union could interfere with impunity in the internal affairs of a country like Czechoslovakia, it would not hesitate to act in a similar fashion in China's internal affairs as well. This, however,

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38 For the Chinese Government statement of 5 February 1967, see *Haiphuu* Selected News Items, no. 8, 20 February 1967, p. 3.


seems to us to be a rather exaggerated reading of the feeling in Peking about Soviet high-handedness. While China resolutely opposed the Soviet action in Czechoslovakia, it must have known of its own capabilities well enough to entertain any fear of a similar Soviet adventure in its own case.

China intensified its ideological propaganda against the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Czechoslovak crisis. A comment commentary gave a lucid account of what it called "the grisly fascist features of the Soviet revisionist renegade clique" in the Soviet intervention. China denounced the Soviet intervention, though it also criticized the ruling group in Czechoslovakia as revisionists. Its propaganda offensive against the Soviet Union turned more hostile after the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia signed a treaty. It argued that the Soviet Union was attempting to "legalize" its military occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Now China started harping on another theme, viz. collusion between the Soviet Union and the United States with a view to re-dividing the world between themselves. According to the communiqué adopted by the enlarged twelfth plenary session of the Right Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, US aggression in Vietnam had the blessings of the Soviet Union and Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia enjoyed "tacit" US support.

43 Ibid., no. 48, 4 November 1968, p. 6.
Another major development was the aggravation of tension on the Sino-Soviet border. On 10 September 1968 the Chinese Foreign Ministry lodged a protest with the Soviet Union against the alleged intrusion of Soviet military aircraft into China's airspace. It declared that the Soviet doings constituted "a fresh military provocation" to China.

Thus Sino-Soviet relations were affected in a major way late in 1968. One would not, however, be justified in coming to the conclusion that the Chinese leadership thought of an alternative policy toward the USA after the crisis in Czechoslovakia. There were no doubt signs of a major change coming, but the factors contributing to it were several. Besides, there was no indication, at least at this stage, that the change had been planned with deliberate intent to befriend the United States as an alternative. The change as it came seemed tentative and uncertain, its pace slow.

The Sino-Soviet border dispute brought about a major change in China's strategic environment which called for a fresh look at China's US policy. Such a reassessment was facilitated by the changes in US policy towards China.

The Sino-Soviet dispute entered upon a new phase when armed clashes took place between the two countries over Chenpao Island on 2 and 16 March 1969. China alleged that it was a "grave incident" deliberately created by the Soviet Union. In a joint editorial Jen-min Jih-pao and Chiah-fang Chun-pao referred

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44 Ibid., no. 39, 23 September 1968, p. 12.

45 Current Background (Hong Kong), no. 876, 11 April 1969, p. 3.
to the Soviet leaders as the "new Tsars" and accused them of plundering the East Europeans, occupying Czechoslovakia, and invading Chinese territory. They also accused the Soviet Union of collaborating with the United States in an attempt to form "a so-called ring of encirclement against China".

The Information Department of the Foreign Ministry of China in a statement on 11 March 1960 described the Soviet action in invading Chinese territory as revealing "the ugly feature of the Soviet revisionist renegade clique which has taken over all the mantle of Tsarist Russian imperialism and is pursuing its social-imperialist policy of aggression". Such was the bitterness in Sino-Soviet relations at this time that the Chinese media repeatedly referred to the Soviet leaders as the "new Tsars". Quite clearly the conflict had entered upon an emotional phase in which rational issues predominated and gave a particularly sour twist to ideological differences.

After a second major clash on the border on 16 March, China observed:

The Soviet revisionist renegade clique has for a long time been colluding as well as contending with US imperialism in a vain attempt to redivide the world in partnership with US imperialism and establish its own social-imperialist hegemony over the world. It has recently concocted the fascist theories of "limited sovereignty" and "international dictatorship".... These fallacies once again show up the Soviet social-imperialists as a bunch of die-hard fascist aggressors who are no different from the US imperialist gangsters.(47)

46 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
The Soviet Union retaliated in kind. At the meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties held in Moscow from 5 June to 7 June 1969 Leonid Brezhnev sharpened castigated China and lashed out at the policies of the 8th Party Congress and China's alleged aspiration to become a Great Power. China had declined to send any delegation to participate in this meeting.

The border clashes were followed by talks between China and the USSR in Peking. These talks, however, came to nothing. China increasingly criticized the USSR in regard to both strategic, national and ideological questions, especially the former. It fell foul of the Soviet Union over its Mediterranean policy, its policy towards the Indian Ocean, and its alleged plans to fill the vacuum in the Indian Ocean after British withdrawal from areas east of Juez. It denounced the Soviet idea of "collective security" in Asia as an "anti-China military alliance to contain China", as a "tool for controlling the Asian countries and to push forward", and as a "social-imperialist policy of aggression in Asia" for "opposing more frantically the great socialist China". It took the Soviet Union to task also for allegedly "stepping up counter-revolutionary collusion with the United States on a global scale". It charged that the Soviet proposal for Asian "regional economic co-operation" was

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49 Keeling's Contemporary Archives (Bristol), 5-12 July 1969, p. 23437.
50 See Jian-min Jih-wuo article as reproduced in SCMP, no. 4422, 23 May 1969, pp. 29-30.
51 SCMP, no. 4449, 7 July 1969, p. 27.
aimed at forming a ring of encirclement round China. It characterized Soviet policies of "aid" and assistance to South-east Asia as "economic infiltration". Finally, it expressed its disapproval of Soviet efforts to develop Siberia with Japanese collaboration.

Thus, Soviet activities on the Sino-Soviet border became the chief target of China's propaganda offensive. The emphasis on matters relating to ideology was reduced.

Steps to Improve Sino-U.S. Relations

Against this background of a national debate on the question of Sino-U.S. relations in the United States, the upheaval in China in the shape of the Cultural Revolution, and the steady aggravation of the Sino-Soviet dispute, let us consider what steps the United States took to improve relations. The US State Department took due note of the policy suggestions made by China experts, academics, and Senators. However, Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey maintained on 11 March 1963, at a time when the debate on China was still in full swing in the United States, that it was necessary to know more about China, particularly China's relations with its neighbours in Asia and the Pacific and the nature of the Chinese Communist ideology and behaviour, as also other aspects. Officials of the State Department were unable to justify their rigidity towards China any more. As Arthur J. Goldberg, the US


representative to the United Nations, alleged on 4 March 1966 that although the United States had made many overtures to China with a view to improving contacts, China had not reciprocated them. Unlike in the past, he made no attempt to associate the war in Vietnam with the question of relations with China. US official policy earlier was to regard China as the most important factor in the war in Vietnam. Now it replaced China with North Vietnam. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, Leonard Unger, referred to the "aggression" in Vietnam as "a Hanoi venture" though he added that if Hanoi succeeded, it would open up the possibility of encouraging the "expansionist thrust of China".

Dean Husk also made it clear that the United States was "not interested in any war with mainland China". He made a detailed speech on 16 March 1966, a speech that was remarkable for its relatively conciliatory tone towards China. In his analysis China was still a militant power. If the United States yielded to China's demands, the only likely outcome would be intransigence on the part of China. All the same, the United States should cast off rigidity in dealing with China. China wanted to be a Great Power. This was why it was frantically arming itself. China was already a mighty power in terms of conventional

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54 Ibid., pp. 541-2.
56 Ibid., no. 1463, 16 May 1965, p. 773.
arms. If it acquired nuclear capability also, it would make a tremendous difference to the equilibrium of power in Asia.

China had of course avoided "situations which might bring it face to face with the United States". This was because it believed in caution. China's words were tougher than its actual deeds.

Nusk then enunciated ten principles of policy that the United States might adopt in dealing with China. These principles included help to those nations which might seek for US help against the use or threat of force by Peking, assistance to Asian countries in their economic development, continuance of the commitment in respect of Taiwan, and prevention of expulsion of Taiwan by force.

Nusk said that the United States should assure China that it would not attack it or gratuitously provoke it into a war. He assumed that China would continue to act with restraint as it had done in the past. He argued that there was nothing eternal about the policies and attitudes of Communist China and that there was no need to assume "the existence of an unending and inevitable state of hostility" between the two countries.

Nusk also underlined the need to develop unofficial contacts with China; for, according to him, such contacts did help in changing China's attitude towards the United States. He conceded that China might not reciprocate the US overtures immediately, but

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58 Ibid., p. 319.
59 Ibid., p. 320.
said that the United States should continue to utilize the diplomatic channel in Warsaw. He called for efforts to "explore and analyze all available information on Communist China" and "keep our own policies up to date". He felt that a continual analysis of information on China would facilitate communication and dialogue. He wanted the United States to try and sit down with Peking and other countries to discuss problems such as disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Nusk's speech on 13 March is an important landmark in the development of the China policy of the United States. The State Department made his ten principles the basis of the policy changes it carried out. There was a notable change in the US posture towards China. The policy as a whole, however, was still clouded by misperceptions. The United States continued to highlight its disagreement with China on Taiwan and even Vietnam. What was significant from our viewpoint is that the United States was now often on the defensive with reference to China.

On 10 July 1966 President Lyndon Johnson made an important speech. He observed that "a peaceful China" was "central to a peaceful Asia". Thus, in his view, China should be "discouraged from aggression" and "encouraged toward understanding of the outside world and toward policies of peaceful co-operation". He claimed that the United States had taken a number of initiatives to

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60 Ibin., p. 320.

61 Nusk observed on 25 March 1966 that the USA had "a major far-reaching, and dangerous disagreement at the present time on Vietnam". See Department of State Bulletin, vol. 54, no. 1393, 11 April 1966, p. 557.
develop and increase its contacts with China, and declared that although these initiatives had not yielded the intended results, his country would persist with its efforts to establish useful contacts; for, in his view, "hunger and disease, ignorance and poverty" recognized no boundaries. He was convinced that "the most rigid societies would awaken to the rich possibilities of a diverse world" and that "co-operation, not hostility" was "the way of the future in the 20th century".

The United States also gave indication of its desire to reduce the level of conflict with China. For instance, in a speech in August 1967, MUSK expressed the US desire to "reduce" and finally "end" the climate of conflict in Sino-US relations. US officials also sought to reassure China that the United States was not interested in posing any kind of threat to it.

To recognition of China's interests in Asia was important. It signalled the new thinking in Washington on the need to come to terms with China. Also, it showed that in spite of conflict, both countries had begun to realize that there were areas where their interests converged. In his State of the Union message on 10 January 1967 President Johnson, indicating a new posture towards China, said that the United States had no intention to deny China its "legitimate needs for security and friendly relations with her neighbouring countries". Secretary MUSK recognized China's role

63 Ibid., vol. 57, no. 1471, 4 September 1967, pp. 283-4.
64 Ibid., no. 1473, 18 September 1967, p. 355.
in Southeast Asia. If China threw its full weight behind an immediate peace in Southeast Asia, he felt, there was every possibility of immediate results.

Now that the US view of China had undergone a change, there was a perceptible improvement in relations, so much so that the United States declared that China’s role in Vietnam had been restrained.

President Johnson stated on 17 October 1966 that he wanted to “hasten the process of keeping alive the free flow of ideas and people” between China and the United States. Again, in May 1967, the US President expressed his hope of improving relations with China. In January 1968 Secretary Hark reiterated the US intention to improve relations with China.

This certainly did not mean that the mutual hostility of past years between the two countries had disappeared altogether. Suspicion of each other’s intentions and attitudes still lingered. For instance, at a news conference Hark warned his countrymen to beware of the danger of “a billion Chinese on the mainland armed with nuclear weapons without any certainty about their attitudes.”

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By the middle of 1968 the United States had done a good deal of spadework for improved relations. Thus, on 3 May 1968, the Director of the US Information Agency invited correspondents from China to cover the 1968 US Presidential election campaign, saying that he would guarantee full freedom to observe and report on the campaign. He also promised to arrange for daily broadcasts by Chinese journalists, and said that no restrictions would be placed on their freedom to express their frank views in the broadcasts. He certainly expected them to be critical of America, but he hoped that their coming would lead to an exchange between the two countries.

The next significant move came on 21 May 1968, when, in the course of a speech, the US Under Secretary of State, Nicolas Katzenbach, reviewed the situation in China. He first outlined China's intransigence in certain fields and thus ruled out US support for its admission into the world body at that time. He also commented on China's ideological orientation, and said that it would be "unrealistic" for the United States to establish diplomatic relations with China. However, he saw signs of change in China's attitude to international affairs generally. As to policy, Katzenbach hinted at the possibility of a review of US trade in non-strategic goods with China. He also spoke of the usefulness of non-official contacts with China. In conclusion, he said that he saw no reason for a confrontation between China and the USA. Indeed he hoped for "better relations with China". Improvement in

72 MacFarquhar, n. 31, p. 236.
mutual relations might come slowly as the US ability to influence "the rate at which changes occur" was "limited". He said: "The winds of change are blowing throughout the world. Sooner or later they must blow even over the Great Wall of China. When they do, if they bring about a Chinese wish for improved relations, the United States will be happy to respond positively."

In three respects, this speech was significant. For one thing it was the first detailed and comprehensive review of the China policy of the United States by a highly placed US official. Secondly, for the first time, by hinting at the possibility of a review of US trade in non-strategic goods with China, it broke the rigidity of past policy. And, lastly, the speech was most carefully worded. It did not contain any word or expression likely to hurt Chinese sentiment.

The American interpretation of events in China and the American policy towards China were from now on marked by extreme caution. The United States continued to recognize Taiwan as a major issue in Sino-American relations, but it no longer ruled out the possibility of opening up contacts with China. US officials repeatedly voiced their hope of improving relations with China. Secretary Dean Rusk took note of the lingering hostility in Peking's postures, but hoped that China would ultimately see the

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73 Ibid., p. 332. As for the question of trade, see Joseph Harsh in Christian Science Monitor (Boston, Mass.), 27 May 1968.

wisdom of seeking reconciliation. He pointed out how the United States had taken certain steps unilaterally to improve relations, and said that, undeterred by the absence of any favourable response from China, the United States would continue to contribute to a policy of "lessening of tensions" in Sino-US relations.

On 20 November 1968 China proposed that the talks in Warsaw be resumed on 20 February 1969. It rejected the charge of failing to respond to the US proposal. It declared its continued adherence to its well-known stand on Taiwan and asked the US Government to withdraw all its armed forces immediately from Taiwan Province and the Taiwan Straits area and to dismantle all military installations in Taiwan. More importantly, it demanded that the United States conclude an agreement with it on the basis of the five principles of peaceful co-existence.

This was the first major step on the part of China towards a rapprochement with the United States. China took this step for several reasons: (1) the Czechoslovak crisis of August 1968 and the cumulating deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations; (2) clear and unequivocal willingness of the United States to improve relations with China as reflected in a number of speeches by US officials, particularly in the speech by Katzenbach; and (3) comparative normalcy in China's domestic affairs. The holding of the twelfth plenum of the Chinese Communist Party on 31 October 1968 showed that there was a fair degree of stability on the domestic front in China.


77 See, for the text of the communiqué, Haihun Selected News Items, no. 45, 4 November 1968, pp. 3-6.
The American Press at first evinced great optimism about improvement in Sino-US relations in view of China's willingness to sign an agreement. It saw in it a shift from a belligerent to a more flexible policy. On 27 November 1968 an editorial in the New York Times characterized the issue of Taiwan as a major impediment in the way of improvement in Sino-US relations. However, on 8 December, another editorial in the same paper, while noting that there was "nothing new or substantial" in China's offer, referred to certain "fresh and intriguing angles".

On 27 January 1969 the US President said that he looked forward to resumption of Sino-US talks in Warsaw with hope. He said that he wanted to know "what the Chinese Communist representatives may have to say at the meeting, whether any changes of attitude on their part on major substantive issues may have occurred." He ruled out any "immediate prospect of any change" in US policy, and said that until he saw evidence of helpful changes in China's attitude there would be no change in US policy.

On 19 February, however, forty-eight hours before the talks were scheduled to take place, China cancelled the talks. It

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80 Ibid., 8 December 1968.

81 For the US President's news conference, see Department of State Bulletin, vol. 65, no. 1547, 17 February 1969, p. 141.

82 Ibid.
accused the United States of giving political asylum to a former member of the Chinese diplomatic mission in the Netherlands, Lia Ho-shu. It went on to say that the United States had created this "anti-China incident" in collusion with the Government of the Netherlands. The Chinese statement added that Nixon had "intensified the mantle of the preceding US Governments in making itself the enemy of the Chinese people".

US officials reacted by saying that Peking had used the asylum issue as a pretext. The real issue, according to them, was China's feeling that there was no possibility of any real progress in Sino-US relations at that time. Some observers saw the cancellation of the talks as a reflection of the internal factional struggles in China itself. Others said that China was preoccupied with its border dispute with the USSR and was not, therefore, in a position to hold talks in Warsaw. It is true that China's border dispute with the USSR was rather hot at this time. China was understandably preoccupied with the tense situation on the border. It possibly thought that it would not be able to give sufficient attention to the talks with the USA. The argument about an internal factional struggle having stalled the talks does not seem convincing. Of course, the factional struggles were still on, but there was no development on that front momentous enough to upset scheduled talks. The continuing and intensified

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83 *Selected News Items*, no. 8, 24 February 1969, p. 7.
warfare in Indo-China could have been another inhibiting factor. The State Department felt disappointed about the cancellation of the talks. On 4 March 1969 President Nixon regretfully said:

Looking further down the road, we could think in terms of a better understanding with Red China. But being very realistic, in view of Red China's breaking off the rather limited Warsaw talks that were planned, I do not think that we should hold out any great optimism for any breakthrough in that direction at this time. (86)

The US Secretary of State also stated that the USA had hoped much from a resumption of the talks, especially in the matter of improving overall Sino-US relations. He added that the USA had even carefully formulated specific suggestions for an agreement looking towards better relations. Nevertheless, in view of the forthcoming Ninth Party Congress and other likely developments, the United States felt that the future held promise for Sino-US relations.

Ninth Congress of the CPC and appraisal of Foreign Policy

The Ninth Party Congress was held in April 1969. By this time the United States had already repeatedly indicated its desire for improved relations with China. China and the Soviet Union had clashed on Changhai Island. The domestic situation in China had

86 For the US President's news conference, see Department of State Bulletin, vol. 60, no. 1552, 24 March 1969, p. 238.
87 Ibid., no. 1555, 14 April 1969, p. 312.
stabilized. The Ninth Party Congress took due notice of these things in its deliberations, and China reassessed its foreign policy in the light of the views expressed on the occasion.

The USSR was now China's major problem. It occupied the best part of Lin Piao's report on foreign policy. Lin sharply criticized the USSR, thus:

Since Brezhnev came to power...the Soviet revisionist renegade clique has been practising social imperialism and social-fascism more fanatically than ever. Internally, it has intensified its suppression of the Soviet people and speeded up the all-round restoration of capitalism. Externally, it has stepped up its collusion with U.S. imperialism and its suppression of the revolutionary struggle of the people of various countries. (89)

Unlike its criticisms of the United States in the past, China's animadversions on the Soviet Union were not couched in general terms. China drew attention to certain specific instances of alleged Soviet misbehaviour in relation to other countries. It condemned the Soviet Union for its exploitation of the various East European countries and of Mongolia, for its "collusion" with the United States in the Middle East, for its threat of aggression against China, for its occupation of Czechoslovakia, and for its armed provocations against China in Chnnpao Island.

China referred to the border negotiations in detail and held that, in betrayal of the stand of Lenin, the Soviet Union had refused to repudiate the old unequal treaties of Tsarist


90 Ibid.
times with China. It alleged, further, that the Soviet Union had refused to negotiate.

In contrast, China's criticisms of the United States were in a low key in both tone and content. Lin Piao's report on foreign policy referred to the Taiwan issue only twice. The comparatively neutral references to the US role in Vietnam showed that it was no longer a "live" issue in Sino-US relations. The USA was seen to be a declining power. The thrust of China's concern was clearly directed towards the Soviet Union.

Although the report carried critical remarks on the joint role of, or collusion between, the USA and the USSR in certain parts of the world, it clearly reflected a desire for a change of perspectives in foreign policy. In particular, it affirmed peaceful co-existence as a principle of its sovereign policy. This symbolized a new direction in China's foreign policy as peaceful co-existence had come under sharp criticism during the earlier Sino-Soviet polemics.

Aftermath of the Ninth Party Congress

This same line in foreign affairs was more pronouncedly in evidence in the aftermath of the Ninth Party Congress. China's comments on the USA can be broadly put under three heads:

First, some comments derived from certain political disagreements which China had with both the USA and the USSR. One

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91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., p. 23.
93 Ibid., p. 25.
such disagreement related to the question of disarmament. China opposed the US-Soviet draft treaty regarding the sea-bed and ocean floor signed in Geneva on 7 October 1969. It said that the treaty enabled the two signatories to conduct nuclear experiments on the sea-bed. It also denounced the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

Secondly, China disagreed with the USA over Taiwan and over US policies towards the countries on China's periphery. American activities in lands on China's periphery were a matter of great concern to China. On 16 October a spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry lodged a protest with the Government of the United States against certain alleged armed provocations offered by US ships to Chinese fishing fleets on the high seas.

Thirdly, China used a good deal of general rhetoric in its criticisms. This, in fact, appeared to indicate that China's hostility towards the USA was no longer sharp-edged. The criticisms were vague and covered issues like alleged US failures on the economic front, reported US arms expansion and military preparations, and US policies of aid in Asia and Africa.

The new foreign-policy line of China thus promised major developments in Sino-US relations. The hostility of the past decades lifted somewhat, facilitating the commencement of a new chapter in Sino-US relations.

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95 Hsueh-hua Selected Laos Items, no. 40, 17 November 1969, p. 23.
denuement of the Process: Further Efforts

China's cancellation of the Warsaw talks had caused considerable disillusionment in US circles, both official and non-official. However, some positive developments took place not long after, and these enabled the United States to renew the process of rapprochement. The foreign-policy line taken by the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party seemed to augur well for a Sino-US rapprochement. The United States also gave a new orientation to its foreign-policy line at Guam in July 1969. It decided progressively to withdraw its ground forces from Asia, which, from the Chinese viewpoint, was a notable development. The speeches and statements of US officials under the new US Administration headed by Richard Nixon gave evidence of a dynamic China policy. The US Secretary of State hinted that the United States might renew its offer to hold talks with China in Warsaw if there was a favourable response from China.

Secretary William Rogers stated on 8 August 1969 that the USA would neither take sides in the Sino-Czech dispute nor abandon

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99 See Rogers' news conference of 20 August 1969, in *Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 61, no. 1576, 8 September 1969, p. 201. Rogers added: "We intend in the future, if it is wise, to take further steps in that direction. We would like to enter into discussions with Communist China. After that, depending on their reactions, if they show any interest in improving relations, we will decide how to proceed". Ibid., p. 207.
its negotiations with China for fear of Soviet displeasure. Under Secretary Elliot L. Richardson held that it was in US interest to seek to improve relations with China. He pointed out how sensitive China was to the US efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union and how uneasy the Soviet Union was about the prospect of an improvement in Sino-US relations. He declared that the USA would like to develop better relations with both the countries.

With a view to improving relations with China the United States made several trade relaxations. For instance, it authorized US companies to trade with China in non-strategic goods. It allowed US companies, particularly those with overseas branches, to buy goods of "presumptive Chinese origin" and resell them in third countries. It permitted American citizens, when overseas, to buy an unlimited amount of Chinese goods for their own private use at home. And it abolished the $100 ceiling on goods to be purchased from China. These were all significant gestures.

Then came the Chinese proposal that the Warsaw talks be resumed on 20 January 1970. Accordingly the talks took place and were described as "useful" and "businesslike". When they ended, no date was announced for the next meeting. US comments

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100 Ibid., vol. 61, no. 1675, 1 September 1969, p. 181.
101 Ibid., no. 1578, 22 September 1969, p. 280.
103 Keesing's Contemporary archives, 16-17 January 1970, p. 23772.
on China were quite cautious after the talks. There can be little doubt that the talks were frank and solid, that they were taking place in the context of new perceptions both in Washington and in Peking and the ground was being prepared for a subsequent breakthrough in their hitherto-frozen relations.

The United States wanted to take further steps. However, some confusion still prevailed about Chinese motives. Rogers had a feeling that China's interest in holding talks with the United States was only to annoy the Soviet Union. Even then the US Administration generally was optimistic as regards improvement of relations with China. Rogers recognized that only small steps were possible at that stage in that direction.

Even as it initiated steps to improve relations with China, the United States re-defined its foreign policy in a new context of relationships. This new foreign-policy line was first announced by President Nixon in Guam and is known as the Nixon Doctrine. In his long report to the US Congress on 18 February 1970, Nixon stressed the importance of negotiation in settling disputes and referred to the Warsaw talks in that context. No nation in his view was "our permanent enemy". He made this statement in the context of his Administration's negotiations with


105 Ibid., no. 1610, 4 May 1970, p. 570.

China.

Nixon drew attention to the special importance of China, and said that in the long run "no stable and enduring international order was conceivable without the contribution of this nation of more than 700 million people". He stressed that the principles governing US relations with China were similar to those governing US relations with the USSR. He said he recognized the gulf of differences between China and the United States and the difficulties that this posed, especially in the context of the American treaty commitment to the Taiwan regime. He, however, promised that the United States would "promote understanding in order to establish a new pattern of mutually beneficial relations". He stressed the importance of better relations with China in terms of US interests and "the interests of peace and stability in Asia and the world".

Defining the US position as regards the Sino-Soviet dispute and the world balance of power, Nixon said:

"Our desire for improved relations is not a tactical means of exploiting the clash between China and the Soviet Union. We see no benefit to us in the intensification of that conflict.... Nor is the United States interested in joining any condominium of hostile coalition of great powers against either of the large communist countries."

The Cambodian Crisis: A Temporary Reversal of the Process

The progress towards rapprochement was briefly inter-

107 Ibid., p. 140.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 142.
rupted by the American intervention in Cambodia in the middle of 1970. China strongly disapproved of the American role in Cambodia. There was much criticism of the American involvement in Cambodia in the Chinese Press as well. China alleged that after instigating the rightist faction in Cambodia to launch a coup d'etat, the United States had intervened and had thus aggravated the situation created by aggression in Indo-China.

On 28 April 1970 a statement issued on behalf of the Government of China put the entire blame on the United States. *Jan-min Jih-pao* in an editorial charged the United States with "making Asians fight Asians". On 4 May 1970 the Government of China issued another statement in which it alleged that the United States had taken a grave step, a step that was sure to expand the war further in Indo-China. It went further: it recognized the Government in exile formed by Prince Sihanouk in Peking on 5 May 1970.

On 20 May 1970 Mao Tse-tung gave a call for unity against the United States. He said that being unable to win in Vietnam and Laos, the American "aggressors" had engineered a reactionary coup d'etat in Cambodia with the help of the Lon Nol--Sirik Matak clique, brazenly dispatched troops to invade Cambodia, and resumed

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bombing of North Vietnam. Meanwhile the Chinese Press alleged that the Americans had repeatedly violated Chinese airspace. It also criticized the Americans for their tardiness in withdrawing troops.

China felt so seriously disturbed by the American doings in Cambodia that it cancelled the talks in Warsaw scheduled for 26 May 1970. However, speaking before the House Committee on Foreign Relations, Secretary Rogers expressed his confidence that the two countries would soon "renew the conversations" in Warsaw. A New York Times editorial argued that though the talks had not come off as scheduled, it was gratifying to note that China had only called it a postponement. It hoped that the strains created as a result of events in Cambodia would end after American withdrawal from Vietnam.

There was in the meantime a positive development. James Edward Walsh, an American national who had been undergoing a term in a Chinese prison for some twelve years, was released. People everywhere took this as an important gesture on the part of China. The United States expressed the hope that China would

115 Ibid., special issue, 26 May 1970, p. 5.
116 Ibid., special issue, 6 July 1970, p. 90.
117 Ibid., no. 31, 3 August 1970.
become less hostile.

Conclusion

The process of approach now reached a stage where a breakthrough in Sino-Japanese relations appeared possible. A striking feature of this phase was that the two countries were able to communicate with each other frankly. Such communication as obtained earlier between the two countries was formal and consisted in a mere reiteration of their respective positions without any effort to exchange views, discuss possibilities or seek modifications in each other's positions. In short, there was no dialogue. During the crucial phase of the escalation of the Vietnam war neither side had a clear awareness of the other's objectives and strategies owing to misperceptions. No doubt the two countries had channels of communication in Warsaw and elsewhere, but these channels served no useful purpose as neither side was willing to communicate frankly owing to suspicion, misperception, and hostility.

By late 1968, having gained a clearer perception of each other's positions through a dialogue, the two countries were able to identify areas where their interests converged. However, this did not immediately result in any appreciable improvement in their mutual relations as they were still keenly aware of the differences between them. Something was still lacking for a breakthrough in their relations. The Chinese leadership in particular had yet to make up its mind on the question of the extent to which it will be willing to go in bringing about improvement of relations. This it did in 1970, and the breakthrough came at last in the year 1971.