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June 21, 1971
Transcript of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and William Attwood

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Summary:

American journalist William Attwood asks Premier Zhou whether the primary obstacle between the U.S. and China is Taiwan, how China plans to reunify with Taiwan, and how China plans to address differences in living standards after reunification. Zhou says that China's stance on the Taiwan issue is that Taiwan belongs to China and the U.S. should not to interfere in China's domestic matters, withdraw its armed forces from the Taiwan straits, and respect China's sovereignty. Zhou believes that living standards will only be improved when Taiwan reunifies with the mainland.

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台湾回归祖国，中美关系会更好*

（一九七一年六月二十一日）

威廉·阿特伍德（以下简称阿）：我感到我们两国在发展关系上最主要的障碍，也就是路障，是台湾的地位问题。美国人民现在已经看出了台湾并不是中国。说台湾是中国只是一个神话。现在这个神话破产了，这也是为什么现在美国人民对真正的中国感兴趣的原因。如何搬掉这个路障呢？美国政府采取哪些措施来搬掉路障呢？你们是不是设身处地为美国政府想一想如何搬掉这个路障，比如在六个月内。

周恩来总理（以下简称周）：限期就不太好回答了。

阿：把六个月忘掉算了。

周：你问我美国政府的做法，当然我不好回答。我愿意说说中国政府的态度。台湾本来是属于中国的，是中

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* 这是同美国《纽约时报》助理总编辑西摩·托平、《每日新闻》社长兼发行人威廉·阿特伍德和《华尔街日报》外事记者罗伯特·基特利等人的谈话节录。

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国的一个省，历史上早就是这样。后来因为发生了一八九四年的中日战争，一八九五年被日本割去了。一九四五年抗日战争结束，根据开罗宣言[13]、波茨坦公告[14]，台湾已经归还中国，回到祖国的怀抱，仍然是中国的一个省。托平先生和朗宁先生在中国人民解放军解放南京的时候，看到了旧中国政府已经垮台，那大概是一九四九年的四月。

一九五〇年一月，美国总统杜鲁门也承认了这个事实。他说得很清楚，台湾已经归还中国，美国政府对台湾没有任何领土野心，大陆和台湾的问题是中国的内政，中国人民自己会解决。这是在一九四九年秋艾奇逊发表白皮书[95]以后，可以说美国政府向世界宣告了对新中国的态度。

但是，到了一九五〇年六月，美国政府的态度忽然变了，派了第七舰队开进台湾海峡，割断了台湾和大陆的联系。

阿：那是因为朝鲜战争[47]。

周：但是那时朝鲜战争和中国没有关系呀！

阿：这个我知道。

周：我们要求美国政府不要继续干涉中国内政，美国一切武装力量从台湾和台湾海峡撤走，尊重中华人民共和国的主权、独立和领土完整。我们尊重美国的主权、独立和领土完整，我们也希望它尊重我们的主权、独立和

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领土完整，我们不会干涉美国内政。这个问题解决了，一切问题就解决了。中美关系，也就是中华人民共和国和美利坚合众国的国家关系就可以建立了。这是我们从一九五五年中美两国大使级会谈〔168〕十五年来一贯的主张，没有别的要求。

阿：关于这一点，现在美国舆论越来越多地承认了。如果将来美国政府也承认这一点，而且美国部队也全部撤走，那么如何把台湾省重新统一到中国，就是说如何把蒋介石和他的部队及台湾人重新吸收回来，是通过谈判来实现，还是用武力来解决呢？

周：台湾人也是中国人，那儿绝大多数是汉族人，不仅蒋介石带去的一百多万人是汉族人，台湾本来八百多万人中，其中绝大多数也是汉族人，语言与福建相似，特别是接近厦门一带的方言。台湾的少数民族叫高山族，在中国，这样的少数民族不少，我们采取民族平等的政策。台湾如何回归到中国，如何解决这个问题，这是我们的内政。一九四六年我离开南京时很多外国记者问我：你走了，还想不想回来？能不能回来？我说，我坚信我们一定会回来的。既然南京都可以回去，那么台湾回归祖国也是不难实现的。

有一个问题特别值得美国注意：蒋介石也反对制造“两个中国”，也反对制造一个中国另外加一个台湾独立实体，也就是“一中一台”。我们跟蒋介石联合过，也敌对

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过，我们打了几十年，但在这一点上有共同性，都认为中国只有一个，外国只能承认一个中国。现在事情就是这样。所以总会找出办法的。

阿：谢谢你。

周：有人说，台湾生活水平很高，台湾回归祖国后，生活水平就会降低。相反，台湾回归祖国后，我们有可能在他们原来的基础上逐步提高他们的生活水平。

第一，不仅不增加税收，还减少税收，如同祖国各地一样。

第二，不需要付债，祖国可以帮助他们建设。诸位知道，我们是一个既无内债也无外债的国家，这是我们稍取得的一点成绩。

阿：恐怕在世界上是独一无二的。

周：我不敢这么说。

第三，我们是低薪制，不收所得税。在台湾的人，他们原来有多少收入，还可以保持多少收入，但因为不收他们的所得税，生活就会更加改善。

部四，有些失业的人，从大陆上去的，生活很困难，可以回到大陆，回到他的家乡，我们不会歧视他们。

第五，如果台湾回归了祖国，在台湾的人对祖国作出了贡献，那么，祖国就应该给他报酬。所以，我们不仅不会报复，而且还会给他们奖励。

诸位大概知道，中国最后一个皇帝，又做过“满洲国”

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的皇帝，曾被监禁过，后来得到解放，恢复了公民自由。很不幸，他四年前死了。他的夫人还在，他的弟弟还在。他弟弟的妻子是一个日本的贵族，也在中国，在北京。蒋介石底下很多高级将领在解放战争中被我们俘虏，现在都找到了职业，不少人在北京。

所以说，这样做只会使台湾得到更多的好处，不会使台湾受到任何损失。如果这样做，中美关系会更好。正如你们报纸二月八日那篇社论所说的，同越南问题一样，美国一切武装力量从台湾和台湾海峡撤走，这是一件光荣的事情，这是一件产生友谊的事情，也是可以喝采的事情。不知你们赞成不赞成这一点，可能我们的看法不完全相同，但我们希望这一天的来到。

阿：至少作为一个纳税人，而且我纳的税是美国向台湾提供十亿美元的一份，我是同意美国从台湾和台湾海峡撤走它的一切武装力量的。美国在干涉人家内政。当然我这完全是自私自利的想法。

周：是啊，这也是为了我们的友谊。这样，世界就会发生变化。

WHEN TAIWAN RETURNS TO THE MOTHERLAND,
U.S-CHINA RELATIONS WILL BE MUCH BETTER*[1]

(JUNE 21, 1971)

William Attwood (hereafter shortened to Attwood): I feel that the main obstacle to the development of relations between our two countries, which is a real roadblock, is the problem of the status of Taiwan. The American people now already see Taiwan as not being China. To say Taiwan is China is just a myth. Now that myth is bankrupt, which is why there is so much interest in the real China among the American people. How can we remove this roadblock? What measures can the U.S. government take to remove this roadblock? Can you put yourself in the position of the U.S. government and think of how this roadblock could be removed, for example within six months?

Premier Zhou Enlai (hereafter shortened to Zhou): It isn't easy to respond given a time-frame.

Attwood: Then forget about the six months.

Zhou: If you ask me what the U.S. government should do, of course I can't give you an answer for that. I would like, however, to explain the Chinese government's attitude. Taiwan has always been part of China, it was a province of China; this has long been the case in history. Later, due to the 1894 Sino-Japanese war, it was cut away by Japan in 1895. In 1945, when the Anti-Japanese War ended, in accordance with the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, Taiwan was already restored to China, returned to the bosom of the motherland, and was still one of China's provinces. Mr. Topping and Mr. Ronning*[2]* were with the Chinese People's Liberation Army when it liberated Nanjing in 1949 and they saw the collapse of the old Chinese government, this was probably in April of 1949.

In January 1950, U.S. President Truman also acknowledged this fact. He said very clearly that Taiwan had been restored to China, that the U.S. government had no territorial ambitions whatsoever towards Taiwan, and the issue between mainland [China] and Taiwan was an internal affair of China, which the Chinese people should resolve on their own. This was after Acheson issued the "White Paper" in the fall of 1949, so one can say that the U.S. government had already announced to the world its attitude towards the New China.

However, in June 1950, the U.S. government's attitude suddenly changed, and it sent the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits, cutting off the connection between Taiwan and mainland [China].

Attwood: That was because of the Korean War.

Zhou: But at the time China had nothing to do with the Korean War!

Attwood: I know that.

Zhou: We want the United States to cease its continual interference in China's internal affairs, remove all U.S. military forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits, to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China. We respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the United States, and we wish that it would respect our sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and we won't interfere in the internal affairs of the United States. Solve this problem, and all problems will be solved.

Sino-American relations, that is, the [diplomatic] relationship between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America, can be established. This has been our consistent position for fifteen years since the start of the U.S.-China Ambassadorial level talks in 1955. We have no other demands.

Attwood: Public opinion in the U.S. now increasingly acknowledges this point. If in the future, the U.S. government were to also accept this point, and American forces were to withdraw completely, then how would you reunite with the province of Taiwan, that is, how would you reabsorb Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] and his troops and the people of Taiwan: would this be realized through negotiation, or would you use military means to settle it?

Zhou: The people of Taiwan are also Chinese, the vast majority of them are of the Han nationality. Not only are the more than a million troops Chiang Kai-shek took with him of the Han nationality, among the more than eight million prior inhabitants of Taiwan the vast majority are of the Han nationality; their language is similar to that of Fujian, especially the dialect spoken around Xiamen. The minority peoples in Taiwan are called the Gaoshan nationality, and in China we have quite a few of such minority nationalities, and we have adopted a policy of equality among nationalities. How Taiwan returns to China, how this problem is solved, is our internal affair. When I left Nanjing in 1946, many foreign journalists asked me: you are leaving; do you want to return, will you be able to return? I said, I am confident we will definitely return. Since we were able to return to Nanjing, it won't be difficult to achieve the return of Taiwan to the motherland.

There is a question that is especially worth the attention of the U.S.: Chiang Kai-shek also opposes creating "two Chinas," and also opposes creating a structure of one China and a separate independent Taiwan; that is, "one China and one Taiwan." We and Jiang have been allies as well as enemies, we have fought for many years, but on this point we are in agreement, we both believe there is only one China, and foreign countries can only recognize one China. This is how things stand now, so we will surely find a solution.

Attwood: Thank you.

Zhou: Some people say that the standard of living in Taiwan is quite high, so once Taiwan returns to the motherland, the standard of living will fall. On the contrary, once Taiwan returns to the motherland, we will be able, on the existing foundation, to step-by-step raise their standard of living.

First, we would not increase their taxes, but would decrease taxes, just like everywhere else in the motherland.

Second, there would be no need to pay down any debt, the motherland would be able to assist their construction. As you all know, we are a country without any internal or external indebtedness, this is one of our lesser achievements.

Attwood: Maybe you are unique in the world.

Zhou: I wouldn't dare say so.

Third, we have a low wage system and don't collect any income tax. As for the people in Taiwan, they can keep the same level of their original income, but since we won't be collecting income tax from them, their livelihood will be even more improved.

Fourth, there are some unemployed people, who came from the mainland, whose living conditions are very difficult; they will be able to return to the mainland, return to their native places, and we won't discriminate against them.

Fifth, if after Taiwan has returned to the motherland, and people on Taiwan make contributions to the motherland, the motherland ought to reward them. So, not only won't will we not retaliate against them, we will in fact honor them.

As you all probably know, the last Emperor of China, who was also the Emperor of "Manchukuo," who was formerly imprisoned, but later released, and regained his freedom as a citizen. Unfortunately, he passed away four years ago. His wife is still alive, as is his younger brother. His brother's wife is a Japanese aristocrat, also in China, in Beijing. Many high-ranking officers under Chiang Kai-shek became our prisoners during the War of Liberation, and now all of them have found work, and not a few are in Beijing.

So, doing things in this way will only give Taiwan considerable benefits, and not cause it any loss whatsoever. If we do this, Sino-American relations will get better. Just as the February 8th editorial in your paper said, the same as with Vietnam, withdrawing all American military forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits, would be a glorious act, an act that would produce friendship, and it would be something worth applauding. I don't know whether you approve or disapprove of this point, it's possible that our views are not entirely the same, but I hope that this will happen one day.

Attwood: At least, as a taxpayer, and the taxes I pay are part of the billions of dollars that the United States provides to Taiwan, I agree that the U.S. should withdraw all its armed forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits. The U.S. does interfere in other people's internal affairs. Of course, my views on this are completely selfish.

Zhou: Yes, this is also for our friendship. This way, the world will change.

* This is an excerpt from a transcript of a conversation with New York Times Assistant Managing Editor Seymour Topping, Newsday Chairman and Publisher William Attwood, Wall Street Journal Foreign Affairs Reporter Robert Keatley, and others.

** Chester Ronning (1884-1984), Canadian diplomat and Topping's father-in-law. (Translator's note)