

**November 3, 1973**

**Cablegram from the Australian Embassy Peking,  
'Prime Minister's Call on Chairman Mao'**

**Citation:**

"Cablegram from the Australian Embassy Peking, 'Prime Minister's Call on Chairman Mao'", November 3, 1973, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives of Australia (NAA), A1838, 3107/38 PART 14.

<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/175870>

**Summary:**

A "slow but articulate" Mao discuss nuclear weapons testing, Taiwan, and the Lin Biao affair with E.G. Whitlam.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## INWARD CABLEGRAM

MDR 10

I.126635

FROM

TOD 03.11.73...1545 LT

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
PEKING

TOR 03.11.73...1906 LT

1180 CONFIDENTIAL PRIORITY

ADDRESSED CANBERRA 1180 WASHINGTON OP372 HONG KONG 432  
PARIS OP373 MOSCOW OP374

PRIME MINISTER'S CALL ON CHAIRMAN MAO

PRIME MINISTER ACCOMPANIED BY FITZGERALD MET CHAIRMAN MAO  
FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE AND A HALF HOURS YESTERDAY.

CHOU EN-LAI AND WANG HUNG-WEN WERE PRESENT.

2. MAO ASKED IF NUCLEAR TESTS ISSUE HAD BEEN RAISED IN  
TALKS WITH CHOU.HE SAID THREE COUNTRIES EXPRESSING GREATEST CONCERN ABOUT THIS  
ISSUE WERE AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND JAPAN.HE SAID HE BELIEVED AUSTRALIA'S PROTESTS WERE ONLY A NECESSARY  
ROUTINE.CHINA DID NOT MIND OUR PROTESTS AND WOULD NOT LIKE THEM TO  
IMPEDE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR RELATIONS.PRIME MINISTER REPLIED WITH SPIRITED AND FORTHRIGHT  
PRESENTATION OF AUSTRALIA'S POSITION.NEITHER MAO NOR CHOU OFFERED CHALLENGE OF THIS POSITION  
OR DEFENCE OF CHINA'S TESTING.MAO DISAGREED HOWEVER WITH PRIME MINISTER'S ARGUMENT THAT  
CHINESE FACED GREATER NUCLEAR THREAT THAN FRENCHMAO SAID FRENCH WERE THREATENED BY SOVIET UNION AND MUST  
DEVELOP INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR CAPACITY.LIKE CHINA FRANCE HAD NOT SIGNED PARTIAL NUCLEAR TEST BAN  
TREATY.3. ON REITERGRATION OF TAIWAN MAO SAID CHINA WOULD HAVE  
TO "WAIT AND SEE".

HE SAID CHINA WAS IN NO HURRY.

BUT GREATEST DIFFICULTY WAS FOR THE 2 MILLION PEOPLE WHO  
WENT TO TAIWAN WITH CHIANG KAI-SHEK AND WHO HAD NOT SEEN THEIR  
FAMILIES FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS.

HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THESE PEOPLE REUNITED.

HE ADDED THAT THEIR CHILDREN HAD NOW BECOME "TAIWANESE".

WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED WHETHER THESE CHILDREN,  
NOT SHARING THE ANIMOSITY OF THEIR PARENTS, WOULD BE MORE  
ANXIOUS FOR REUNIFICATION, MAO REPLIED "POSSIBLY".

.../2

M.P. Dwyer

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



## DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## INWARD CABLEGRAM 126635

CONFIDENTIAL

4. ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD OF THE CONVERSATION WAS TAKEN UP WITH DISCUSSION OF DOMESTIC CHINESE POLITICS AND PERSONALITIES.

PRIME MINISTER ASKED ABOUT WANG HUNG-WEN'S BACKGROUND AND WHERE MAO HAD "FOUND HIM".

MAO REPLIED "I DON'T KNOW".

IT WAS POINTED OUT BY MAO, CHOU AND WANG THAT THERE WERE MANY OTHERS LIKE HIM.

WANG SEEMED VERY ANXIOUS TO CORRECT PRIME MINISTER'S IMPRESSION THAT HE HAD NOT EVEN BEEN BORN AT THE TIME OF THE LONG MARCH.

HE POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS 38 AND THAT HE HAD BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG TIME WHILE MAO AND CHOU WERE MAKING REVOLUTION.

PRIME MINISTER ASKED WHY TENG HSIAO-PING HAD NOT ATTENDED 9TH PARTY CONGRESS.

MAO SAID THIS WAS BECAUSE PROBLEM OF LIN PIAO HAD NOT BEEN SETTLED.

MAO SAID LIN WAS PRO-SOVIET.

HE HAD KNOWN HIM FOR MANY YEARS.

THEY HAD OCCASIONALLY COOPERATED BUT MORE OFTEN WERE OPPOSED.

LIN'S FLIGHT NORTHWARDS "PROVED" HIS PRO-SOVIET INTENT. DOCUMENTS FOUND AFTER LIN'S FLIGHT HAD CONFIRMED THIS.

5. DISCUSSION OF ADVANCES IN CHINA SINCE 1949 PROVOKED FROM MAO PRIMARILY STATEMENTS ABOUT THE NEED TO DO MORE AND THE ASSERTION THAT CHINA IS STILL A POOR AND UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRY.

"THERE IS ONE GOOD THING ABOUT CHINESE POVERTY, IT MAKES PEOPLE WANT REVOLUTION".

HE ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER "WOULD YOUR PARTY DARE TO MAKE REVOLUTION?"

THERE FOLLOWED A DISCUSSION ON REVOLUTION, EVOLUTION, DARWINISM AND HUXLEY.

6. OTHER SUBJECTS COVERED INCLUDED GEOGRAPHY, FLORA AND FAUNA OF AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIAN HISTORY, THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH, AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND BRITAIN, ALL IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONING BY MAO.

AT CONCLUSION OF TALK QUESTION OF YOUTH AND SUCCESSORS WAS DISCUSSED AGAIN.

BOTH MAO AND CHOU SAID THEY WOULD NOT BE AROUND TO SEE THE COMPLETION OF THE REVOLUTION.

MAO SAID "MY BODY IS RIDDLED WITH DISEASE": CHOU "HE HAS GOT RHEUMATISM IN HIS KNEES".

MAO "I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH GOD".

7. MAO WAS ABLE TO STAND AND WALK UNAIDED. ALTHOUGH FRAIL HE LOOKED WELL.

.../3

CONFIDENTIAL



## DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## INWARD CABLEGRAM

-3-

I.126635

HIS SPEECH WAS SLOW BUT ARTICULATE AND IN QUESTIONING THE PRIME MINISTER HE SHOWED THAT HE IS MENTALLY ALERT.

8. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAO AND CHOU IS EASY AND RELAXED. CHOU IS CAREFUL IN WHAT HE SAYS (FOR EXAMPLE IN DISCUSSING THE CCP IN THE 1920'S HE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN YOUNG AND HAD COMMITTED SERIOUS MISTAKES) BUT MY STRONG IMPRESSION IS THAT CHOU IS ULTIMATELY IN COMMAND.

WHILE MENTALLY ALERT I DO NOT BELIEVE MAO HAS THE STRENGTH TO RUN THE COUNTRY OR EVEN THE DAY TO DAY AFFAIRS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

CHOU ALL BUT COAXED HIM ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS AND HIS ATTITUDE I WOULD DESCRIBE AS WATCHFUL AND SHEPHERDING.

WANG HUNG-WEN DID NOT CONTRIBUTE MUCH TO THE CONVERSATION BUT I LEFT THE MEETING WONDERING WHETHER CHOU AND WANG TOGETHER WITH NANCY TANG AND ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER WANG HAI-RUNG BOTH OF WHOM WERE PRESENT MIGHT NOT CONSTITUTE THE CENTRE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY BY VIRTUE OF PHYSICAL ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER THE CHAIRMAN.

A/PRIME MINISTER  
A/FOREIGN MINISTER  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
MIN AND DEPT DEFENCE  
J10  
PM'S

ACTION: NA

SEC DEP SEC(A)(B) PR MCO FAS(SA) SEA MN FAS(NWA) NA WAME FAS(PW)  
PC ECSA FAS(DEF) DP IC FAS(DVP) ICR FAS(10) FAS(CL) FAS(MS)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL