

April 30, 1976

**Meeting between Mr. Muldoon and Mao Zedong at
Chairman Mao's Residence, 30 April 1976**

Citation:

"Meeting between Mr. Muldoon and Mao Zedong at Chairman Mao's Residence, 30 April 1976", April 30, 1976, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archives New Zealand, Item R18227103 ABHS 6943/1 BEI 25/3/3 1.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/119340>

Summary:

An ailing Mao Zedong and Robert Muldoon discuss China's recent nuclear tests and agree that the Soviet Union is a common threat for both China and New Zealand. Both Mao himself and the note-takers from New Zealand make frequent mention to the Chairman's deteriorating health.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING BETWEEN MR MULDOON AND MAO TSE-TUNG
AT CHAIRMAN MAO'S RESIDENCE, 30 APRIL 1976
(from approx. 8.00 p.m to 8.15 p.m)

Mr Muldoon was due to leave the guest-house at 7.20 p.m. for a Soiree arranged by the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee. At about 7.10 the Chief of Protocol arrived to inform Mr Muldoon that a meeting had been arranged with Chairman Mao and that he would depart for his residence at about 7.30. The Soiree would be delayed until Mr Muldoon's arrival.

The Chief of Protocol said that Mr Muldoon should be accompanied by Mrs Muldoon, Mr Corner and the Ambassador. After these four had been introduced, Mrs Muldoon and the Ambassador should withdraw and the Prime Minister and Mr Corner should stay for a brief conversation. Those meeting Chairman Mao were advised that his health was delicate and handshakes should be gentle.

Cars carrying the visiting party went through the red gate on the street of Eternal Peace to enter a quite different world: a large lake fringed with willow trees stretched out far away. It was dark; the cars drove round the lakeside, turned off, drove in and out among tree lined paths, and stopped at Chairman Mao's residence.

The visitors were taken through the hall to a small reception area (with a number of fairly well-used armchairs) and into a room full of armchairs and tables and books and magazines. (The entry and reception areas emitted a gently perfumed smell; neither antiseptic nor incense.) Chairman Mao was assisted, almost lifted, from his armchair to a standing position (by his female interpreter/nurse) and supported while the visitors shook hands with him. Photographers (including television) were present. Hua Kuo-feng and

CONFIDENTIAL

Chiao Kuan-hua were in attendance. Mrs Muldoon and Mr Atkins moved out to the reception room; Chairman Mao was assisted to his armchair and slumped back in it in a state of seeming collapse; his interpreter/nurse sat close behind him; Hua Kuo-feng, Mr Muldoon and Mr Corner and a male interpreter sat in armchairs in a semi-circle. Hot towels and large cups of tea were provided but not used.

Various tables had on them neatly arranged magazines and books, and writing pads and pencils. In two places where he presumably read and wrote most (a table by his armchair and a reading table a few yards away) there were piles of white face cloths. (But he had no need to use one during the meeting.)

When photographers came in at the beginning of the conversation with Mr Muldoon, the nurse/interpreter moved Mao in his chair from a nearly comatose to an upright position; he did not seem able to move unaided; but later in the meeting when he saw a photographer coming forward he sat more upright without help.

Mao had been carefully dressed in a grey tunic suit. As we were going out I noticed that he was slumped back in his chair and the nurse/interpreter was making haste to undo the collar of his tunic. The effort involved to undertake this short meeting had clearly taxed his physical resources to the limit.

The kindness and gentleness of everyone present towards Mao was especially noteworthy.

Chi Chiao-chin
 came to China about 1950
 in US after 8-20 yrs Interpreter for Chou En-lai
 brief Nixon Mao late 1972
 then back to NY right after China admitted.
 (in interpreter?)
 1973 Wash DC Polit Counsellor
 recently returned from Wash

Mao: My legs are not too good. (1)
How did the talks go?

Muldoon: They went well. We found a great measure of agreement and everyone has shown friendship and understanding.

Mao: The world is in confusion. (2)

Muldoon: I am convinced that through their courage and strength the will of the people will prevail.

Mao: No, no. (3)

Muldoon: If the people have good leadership.

Mao: There is Russia.

Muldoon: But Russia will never prevail. (4)

Mao: Japan and New Zealand don't like our tests. You should curse us.

Muldoon: We understand the circumstances in which you are placed. We are opposed to nuclear war and nuclear tests and must protest. But we understand your situation.

Mao: After a few years tests will be underground. That will be better.

Muldoon: Yes.

Mao: How were your discussions in Japan?

Muldoon: Very friendly. New Zealand now has good relations with Japan. There are very few problems between us. We see the future of our peoples as friendly. We share the fear of the Soviet Union, as does China.

Mao: Japan, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Europe, all fear the Soviet Union.

Muldoon: Yes.

Mao: (To the male interpreter.) How long were you in the United States? What University?

Interpreter:
Twelve years (?) I was at Harvard University.

Mao: How is Oceania?

Muldoon: We have no problems among ourselves. We have some economic difficulties, which we shall overcome. Both Australia and New Zealand see the only serious threat as the continuing activity and aggression of the Soviet Union.

At this stage the meeting came to an end. Mao was assisted - almost lifted - to his feet from the armchair to stand and shake hands with the departing visitors.

-
- (1) Mao having previously been assisted out of his armchair and supported by his interpreter/nurse while shaking hands; pushed forward from lounging into upright position in his armchair while photographers were at work; and now resting back in armchair.
 - (2) What emerged from Mao's mouth were occasional grunts and groans as he struggled to get out the necessary word. The interpreter/nurse, intelligent and gentle, would decipher these noises - sometimes seeming to peer into his larynx - and decipher them (presumably in Mandarin) to a male interpreter who put them into polished, often colloquial, English. Sometimes, especially when Mao was speaking on less familiar matters - in the course of speaking on matters raised by Mr Muldoon - the girl interpreter would decipher a sound and wait for an indication as to whether she had got it right; she would keep trying, quickly and sympathetically, until Mao indicated that she was saying what he wanted her to say. When this failed he would ask for pencil and paper; the nurse/interpreter would steady the writing pad, he would write a number of characters

and the interpretation would be given. At times when he was frustrated at his inability to speak, or for emphasis, he would bring one or both arms into operation with slow movements.

- (3) Anguish, desperation, seemed to be moving him as he made his groans at this and the next succeeding points.
- (4) Mao indicated agreement.
- (5) This exchange was very friendly, as was the atmosphere among all present. The Prime Minister, Hua Kuo-feng, often smiled gently and clearly felt great affection for Mao. Although Mao's physical state and his problem in speaking was distressing there was no sign of embarrassment among those present - gentleness, even love, seemed the predominant feeling.

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING BETWEEN MR MULDOON AND MAO TSE-TUNG [Mao Zedong]
AT CHAIRMAN MAO'S RESIDENCE, 30 APRIL 1976
(from approx. 8.00 p.m to 8.15 p.m)

Mr Muldoon was due to leave the guest-house at 7.20 p.m. for a Soiree arranged by the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee. At about 7.10 the Chief of Protocol arrived to inform Mr Muldoon that a meeting had been arranged with Chairman Mao and that he would depart for his residence at about 7.30. The Soiree would be delayed until Mr Muldoon's arrival.

The Chief of Protocol said that Mr Muldoon should be accompanied by Mrs Muldoon, Mr Corner and the Ambassador. After these four had been introduced, Mrs Muldoon and the Ambassador should withdraw and the Prime Minister and Mr Corner should stay for a brief conversation. Those meeting Chairman Mao were advised that his health was delicate and handshakes should be gentle.

Cars carrying the visiting party went through the red gate on the street of Eternal Peace to enter a quite different world: a large lake fringed with willow trees stretched out far away. It was dark; the cars drove round the lakeside, turned off, drove in and out among tree lined paths, and stopped at Chairman Mao's residence.

The visitors were taken through the hall to a small reception area (with a number of fairly well-used armchairs) and into a room full of armchairs and tables and books and magazines. (The entry and reception areas emitted a gently perfumed smell; neither antiseptic nor incense.) Chairman Mao was assisted, almost lifted, from his armchair to a standing position (by his female interpreter/nurse) and supported while the visitors shook hands with him. Photographers (including television) were present. Hua Kuo-feng [Hua Guofeng] and Chiao Kuan-hua [Qiao Guanhua] were in attendance. Mrs Muldoon and Mr Atkins moved out to the reception room; Chairman Mao was assisted to his armchair and slumped back in it in a state of seeming collapse; his interpreter/nurse sat close behind him; Hua Kuo-feng, Mr Muldoon and Mr Corner and a male interpreter sat in armchairs in a semi-circle. Hot towels and large cups of tea were provided but not used.

Various tables had on them neatly arranged magazines and books, and writing pads and pencils. In two places where he presumably read and wrote most (a table by his armchair and a reading table a few yards away) there were piles of white face cloths. (But he had no need to use one during the meeting.)

When photographers came in at the beginning of the conversation with Mr Muldoon, the nurse/interpreter moved Mao in his chair from a nearly comatose to an upright position; he did not seem able to move unaided; but later in the meeting when he saw a photographer coming forward he sat more upright without help.

Mao had been carefully dressed in a grey tunic suit. As we were going out I noticed that he was slumped back in his chair and the nurse/interpreter was making haste to undo the collar of his tunic. The effort involved to undertake this short meeting had clearly taxed his physical resources to the limit.

The kindness and gentleness of everyone present towards Mao was especially noteworthy.

[Handwritten] Chi Ch'ao-ch'en came to China about 1950

in US 8-20 yrs
Interpreter for Chou En-Lai
[Illegible] Nixon/Mao talks 1972
Then headed to NY right after Chinese [illegible] (interpreter?)
1973 went to Polit Committee
Recently returned from [illegible]

Mao: My legs are not too good. How did the talks go? [\[i\]](#)

Muldoon: They went well. We found a great measure of agreement and everyone has shown friendship and understanding.

Mao: The world is in confusion. [\[ii\]](#)

Muldoon: I am convinced that through their courage and strength the will of the people will prevail.

Mao: No, no. [\[iii\]](#)

Muldoon: If the people have good leadership.

Mao: There is Russia.

Muldoon: But Russia will never prevail. [\[iv\]](#)

Mao: Japan and New Zealand don't like our tests. You should curse us.

Muldoon: We understand the circumstances in which you are placed. We are opposed to nuclear war and nuclear tests and must protest. But we understand your situation.

Mao: After a few years tests will be underground. That will be better.

Muldoon: Yes.

Mao: How were your discussions in Japan?

Muldoon: Very friendly. New Zealand now has good relations with Japan. There are very few problems between us. We see the future of our peoples as friendly. We share the fear of the Soviet Union, as does China.

Mao: Japan, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Europe, all fear the Soviet Union.

Muldoon: Yes.

Mao: (To the male interpreter.) How long were you in the United States? What University?

Interpreter: Twelve years (?) I was at Harvard University.

Mao: How is Oceania?

Muldoon: We have no problems among ourselves. We have some economic difficulties, which we shall overcome. Both Australia and New Zealand see the only serious threat as the continuing activity and aggression of the Soviet Union.

At this stage the meeting came to an end. Mao was assisted - almost lifted - to his feet from the armchair to stand and shake hands with the departing visitors.[\[v\]](#)

[\[i\]](#) Mao having previously been assisted out of his armchair and supported by his interpreter/nurse while shaking hands; pushed forward from lounging into upright position in his armchair while photographers were at work; and now resting back in armchair.

[\[ii\]](#) What emerged from Mao's mouth were occasional grunts and groans as he struggled to get out the necessary word. The interpreter/nurse, intelligent and gentle, would decipher these noises - sometimes seeming to peer into his larynx - and decipher them (presumably in Mandarin) to a male interpreter who put them into polished, often colloquial, English. Sometimes, especially when Mao was speaking on less familiar matters - in the course of speaking on matters raised by Mr Muldoon - the girl interpreter would decipher a sound and wait for an indication as to whether she had got it right; she would keep trying, quickly and sympathetically, until Mao indicated that she was saying what he wanted her to say. When this failed he would ask for pencil and paper; the nurse/interpreter would steady the writing pad, he would write a number of characters and the interpretation would be given. At times when he was frustrated at his inability to speak, or for emphasis, he would bring one or both arms into operation with slow movements.

[\[iii\]](#) Anguish, desperation, seemed to be moving him as he made his groans at this and the next succeeding points.

[\[iv\]](#) Mao indicated agreement.

[\[v\]](#) This exchange was very friendly, as was the atmosphere among all present. The Prime Minister, Hua Kuo- feng, often smiled gently and clearly felt great affection for Mao. Although Mao's physical state and his problem in speaking was distressing there was no sign of embarrassment among those present - gentleness, even love, seemed the predominant feeling.