

## **April 14, 1971**

# **[Zhou Enlai's] Conversation with the U.S. Table Tennis Delegation**

### **Citation:**

"[Zhou Enlai's] Conversation with the U.S. Table Tennis Delegation", April 14, 1971, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Zhou Enlai Waijiao wenxuan [Selected Diplomatic Papers of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1990), pp. 469-475. Translated by Gao Bei. Originally included in Chen Jian, ed., "Chinese Materials on the Sino-American Rapprochement (1969-1972)" (unpublished collection, February 2002)  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/260525>

### **Summary:**

Zhou Enlai speaks with President of the U.S. Table Tennis Association, Graham Steenhoven, after the 31st annual World Table Tennis Championships. Steenhoven thanks Premier Zhou for inviting the U.S. ping-pong team and U.S. journalists to China. U.S. journalists ask Zhou to comment on the American hippie movement. Steenhoven extends an invitation to the Chinese ping-pong team to visit the U.S.

### **Original Language:**

Chinese

### **Contents:**

Original Scan  
Translation - English

## 同美国乒乓球代表团的谈话\*

(一九七一年四月十四日)

**周恩来总理**(以下简称周): 团长先生是第一次到中国来吧?

**格雷厄姆·斯廷霍文**<sup>[336]</sup>(以下简称斯): 是的。我们代表团每个成员都是第一次到中国来。

**周:** 对中国有点生疏吧?

**斯:** 是的。对中国完全不熟悉,但对你们的好客很熟悉。

**周:** 中国有句古话说:“有朋自远方来,不亦乐乎。”<sup>[337]</sup>。

**斯:** 在美国也有这样的说法,不论在哪个地方都可以找到很好的朋友。我们欢迎中国朋友去美国访问。

**周:** 是啊,罗德里克<sup>[338]</sup>先生就来过中国。我和他比

---

\* 一九七一年三月底四月初,第三十一届世界乒乓球锦标赛在日本的名古屋举行。比赛结束后,美国、加拿大、哥伦比亚、英格兰和尼日利亚的乒乓球代表团应邀访华,受到周恩来的接见。这是同美国乒乓球代表团的谈话。

较熟悉。我和你们国家的一些新闻记者比较熟悉，他们都要来中国。当然一次不能都来，就分批来嘛。

**斯：**我们很高兴你们让我们的记者来中国。

**周：**你们可以来，他们也可以来嘛。

**斯：**对你们这样安排，我们很高兴。他们来了以后我们才能更熟悉起来。

**周：**不可能每个方面都熟悉。今天不仅美国记者、加拿大记者、路透社记者，还有别的国家的记者都来了。

过去有很多美国朋友来过中国，以后还会有不少朋友来。

**斯：**我想如果能够受到象对我们这样的热情欢迎和款待，碰到这样好的中国朋友的话，一定会有很多美国人要到中国来访问。我们也希望中国朋友能到美国去访问。

**周：**是啊，中美两国人民以后会经常彼此友好来往的。对不对？

**斯：**我们非常高兴听到这一点。我们希望能很快开始。

**周：**我想不会慢的。

**斯：**我们在美国等着欢迎你们。

**周：**那好。今天你们各位去逛颐和园，刮风了，对不起。这个节目和天气不符，发生了矛盾。

**斯：**其实我们对天气没什么抱怨，这种风在我们国内也常遇到，我们去时有准备，主人劝告我们带着大衣，

这是很好的劝告。

**周：**不要受凉了。

**斯：**在哪儿着凉都不好。

**周：**多保重。

**斯：**希望你也保重。

**周：**谢谢你。昨天你们球打得不错。

**斯：**我们的选手是尽力而为。同时，我们从你们的选手那里学到了不少东西，对我们很有帮助。你们选手花了很多时间教我们年轻选手技术。他们对我们非常照顾，而且有礼貌。

**周：**是不是这样啊？

**斯：**的确是这样的。

**周：**不要太夸张。

**斯：**不管我们到什么地方，我们的主人总是问我们有什么批评、建议没有。我就想尽办法找，看有什么地方可以批评的，最后我找到了一点。

**周：**嗯，是哪一点啊？

**斯：**就是你们给我们吃得太多了。

**周：**你们可以选择吃。

**斯：**比如说有一次我们去吃饭，看到冷盘以后，我们以为是正餐，就吃了，结果后来一下子上了十道菜，我们还得吃，为着答谢你们的盛意，我们还是把这些都吃掉了。

**周：**怪主人没有告诉你们，菜单上也没有写清楚，前面的是小吃，后面的是正餐。

**斯：**菜单是有的，但只顾吃了，就没再看菜单。

**周：**那可以原谅。

**蒂姆·博根：**我是美国乒协副主席博根。我只想说，我今天上白大理石楼梯，看到《江山如此多娇》那幅画，十分欣赏，就象进入诗意般的仙境一样。

**周：**你太夸奖了。

**迪克·迈尔斯：**我是美国《体育画报》的记者迪克·迈尔斯。我到这里来有双重身份。一方面我是记者，另一方面我又是官方正式邀请的代表团成员之一。感谢你们的邀请。

**周：**是的，你是这个团的成员之一。

**杰克·霍华德**（以下简称霍）：**我是美国乒乓球队的领队杰克·霍华德。我想说，我希望中国乒乓球队能够在最近的将来访问美国，以便给我们一个机会来报答你们的好客精神并在美国进行友谊比赛。**

**周：**你的希望是好的。这个问题要决定于你们的团长。他是有权威的，所以还是保留给团长回答。同意吗？

**霍：**同意。

**周：**我的意思是指团长同意吗？

**斯：**同意。

**周：**没有问题了？

**格伦·科恩**<sup>[339]</sup> (以下简称科): 我有一个问题。我想问一问,总理对目前在美国青年中流行很广泛的“嬉皮士”运动有什么评论?有什么看法?我很想了解这些。

**周:** 第一,我对这个运动不很清楚。第二,如果要问的话,我只能说一点我的粗浅的、表面的观察。可能现在世界青年对现状有点不满,想寻求真理。青年思想波动时会表现为各种形式。但各种表现形式不一定是成熟的或固定的。因为,寻求真理的途径总要通过各种实践来证明是对还是不对,这在青年时代是许可的。各种思想都要通过实践检验一下。我们年轻的时候也是这样,所以我们懂得青年人的心理:特别好奇。别的国家的青年来访问时,我们发现他们不一定和你们同一派,但是我们看到也有这样的形式,比如留长头发,等等。我碰到过英国青年也有留长发的,碰到过日本青年也有这样情况的。

**科:** 对,总理先生。这些表现形式是许多日子思索的结果,它比表面上看到的更深刻。这是一种新的思想,没有很多人熟悉它,可能有少数人熟悉。

**周:** 按照人类发展来看,一个普遍真理最后总要被人们认识的,和自然界的规律一样。我们赞成任何青年都有这种探讨的要求,这是好事。要通过自己的实践去认识。但是有一点,总要找到大多数人的共同性,这就可以使人类的大多数得到发展,得到进步,得到幸福。我只

能回答这些了。

**科：**同意。

**周：**补充一句话，如果自己通过实践证明是错误的，就应该改。正确的坚持，错误的改正，这是我们的认识。做为朋友，我们所以有这个建议。

**科：**我们有这样一个思想，即进步只能从变化和  
精神发展中得到。

**周：**精神只有变成物质的力量才能前进，只有得到大多数人的赞成才行，因为总是需要有大多数人赞成嘛。这是一个规律，我这是讲哲学了。

**科：**谢谢。

**周：**乒乓里也是有哲学的。我看你打得不错嘛。

**科：**也许可以打得更好一点。

**周：**祝你进步。

**科：**谢谢。

**周：**讲到哲学，我又把毛主席的话拿出来了，“从群众中来，到群众中去”。这是我们的实践精神，也是我们的理论指导。

美国朋友刚才都已经谈了。我请你们回去把中国人民的问候转告给美国人民。中美两国人民过去往来是很频繁的，以后中断了一个很长的时间。你们这次应邀来访，打开了两国人民友好往来的大门。我们相信中美两国人民的友好往来将会得到两国人民大多数的赞成和支

持。罗德里克先生，你打开门了。

**约翰·罗德里克：**谢谢你，总理先生。我首先感谢你邀请美国记者访华。美国记者访华，经过这么长时间的中断，终于实现了。同时我赞成你刚才的说法，我们的关系打开了新的一页。如果我们两国间有更好的谅解，这新的一页将更加美好。我希望通过记者的报道，这种关系会得到改善。

**周：**谢谢你的好意。



Premier Zhou Enlai ("Zhou" in further text): Mr. Manager, this is your first visit to China, isn't it?

Graham Steenhoven ("Steenhoven" in further text): Yes, it is. This is the first time any member of our delegation has been to China.

Zhou: You are not very familiar with China, aren't you?

Steenhoven: No, I am not. I know nothing about China. But I am well aware of your hospitality.

Zhou: There is an old adage in China: "Guests from a far away land are always a pleasure to meet."

Steenhoven: We have a similar proverb, and our Chinese friends are always welcome in the United States.

Zhou: Yes, I know Mr. Roderick<sup>[1]</sup> well, he has been to China and I know some American journalists who are interested in visiting China. It is difficult to invite them all at once, but we could invite them in groups.

Steenhoven: It is a great pleasure to accept your invitation for our journalists.

Zhou: They can visit us just like you are doing.

Steenhoven: We are very happy about these plans. Their visit will let us get to know each other even better.

Zhou: But it is not only the American journalists who are welcome here. Canadian, British, and journalists from other countries are here today. Many American friends have been to China before, and I am sure there will be more to come from now on.

Steenhoven: If the Americans who come to China in the future are treated as kindly as we are and get to meet such wonderful Chinese friends as we do, there will be more willing to visit China. We wish our Chinese friends a good time in visiting the United States too.

Zhou: I hope that both the Chinese and the American people will be able to pay friendly visits to each other often from now on.

Steenhoven: We are very glad to hear this. We hope we could start visiting each other as soon as possible.

Zhou: I hope so too.

Steenhoven: We are looking forward to meeting you in the States.

Zhou: Thank you. I'm sorry to hear that it was windy when you visited the Summer Palace today. We hoped it wouldn't be.

Steenhoven: Nobody complained because we get the same kind of weather in the States plus we were told to bring our coats, which was a very good advice.

Zhou: I hope you will not get a cold.

Steenhoven: It would be bad to get a cold.

Zhou: Take care.

Steenhoven: You take care too.

Zhou: Thank you. The players played very well yesterday.

Steenhoven: They did their best. We learned a lot from the Chinese players at the same time. It was very helpful. The Chinese players spent hours to train our young athletes. They were very friendly and polite.

Zhou: Were they?

Steenhoven: Yes, absolutely.

Zhou: You bet.

Steenhoven: Wherever we went, our hosts would always ask us whether we had any critical comments or suggestions. Eventually, I found something to criticize.

Zhou: What was it?

Steenhoven: That you always fed us too much.

Zhou: You do not have to eat everything.

Steenhoven: For example, one day we thought that what was an appetizer was an entree, but we had to eat about ten courses right after that.

Zhou: Next time the hosts should let you know beforehand and it should be clearly written on the menu. The dishes which come first are the appetizers, those that come after are the main dishes.

Steenhoven: Although we had menus, we were too preoccupied with eating to look at them.

Zhou: I see.

Tim Boggan: My name is Tim Boggan, vice president of American Table Tennis Association. I would like to say that I liked the painting of beautiful rivers and mountains I saw in our hotel.

Zhou: Thank you.

Dick Miles: I am Dick Miles, a journalist with Sports Illustrated. I am here as a journalist and as a member of the American delegation formally invited by the Chinese government. Thank you for your invitation.

Zhou: Yes, you are a member of this delegation.

Jack Howard: (Howard in further text): I am Jack Howard, secretary of American Table Tennis team. I hope Chinese team get a chance to visit the States in the near future, so we could return your hospitality and play some table tennis in the States.

Zhou: That is fine. But I guess, it is up to your manager to decide. Do you think so?

Howard: Yes, I think so. Zhou: Does Mr. Manager agree with me?

Steenhoven: Yes, I agree. Zhou: Do you have any further questions?

Glenn Cowen ("Cowen" in further text) Would you mind if I ask your opinion about the American "hippies" movement?

Zhou: I don't know much about this movement but as far as my personal limited opinion goes, I think, young people throughout the world may be dissatisfied with the current situation and try to find the truth. There are many things that indicate changes in young people's minds. But those things wouldn't always be mature and unaltered. Because the way of finding the truth must always be tested by practice, it is OK when people are young. When we were young we did similar things, so I can understand how young people feel; they are just curious. We noticed that young people from other countries, have the same style as American hippies. For example, I have met long-haired young people from Britain and Japan.

Cowen: You are right. Young people do take the style, which expresses the changes of their minds seriously. "Hippies" movement is a kind of new idea, few people know much about it.

Zhou: In the development of human history, as the law of nature, a universal truth will always be acknowledged by human beings at last. It is good for young people to try new things. But they have to learn them from their own experience. Also, only when an idea is shared by the majority of human beings, can it help humanity's development and prosperity. This is all I meant to say.

Cowen: Thank you.

Zhou: One more point. If a new idea is proven incorrect by practice, it must be corrected. We always have to insist on right ideas and correct the wrong ones. I suggest this to you as a friend.

Cowen: We also believe that progress only comes from change and spiritual development.

Zhou: Spirit could not improve progress until it changes to physical power and is supported by the majority of people. This is a philosophical rule.

Cowen: Thank you.

Zhou: There are philosophical rules in table tennis, too. You play very well.

Cowen: I hope I could play better in the future.

Zhou: Good luck.

Cowen: Thank you.

Zhou: Talking about philosophy, Chairman Mao said, "come from the masses and go into the masses (new ideas should come from the people, be tested by and serve the people)." This is our practical motto and theoretical guideline.

I hope you give the Chinese people's best wishes to the American people. Although our contacts have been suspended for a long time, China had frequent contacts with the United States before. Your visit has just opened the door for a friendly Sino-American relationship. We believe that the majority in both countries will support this friendly relationship. Mr. Roderick, you opened the door.

John Roderick: Thank you. First of all, I appreciate your invitation for American journalists which enabled American journalists to eventually come to visit China again after a long hiatus. I agree with what you said. We did open a door for the new Sino-American relations. And our relations could become even better if both peoples could understand each other better. I hope our reports would further improve the Sino-American relations.

Zhou: Thank you.

[\[1\]](#) John Roderick was then an AP reporter in Tokyo, whom Zhou met in the 1940s.