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**Report Sent to General de Gaulle, President of the
French Republic, by Edgar Faure, on his Mission to
China**

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Summary:

Edgar Faure briefs Charles de Gaulle on his visit to China, his meetings with senior Chinese leaders, and the prospects for Sino-French normalization.

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Report sent to General de Gaulle
President of the French Republic

By Edgar Faure, on his mission to China

Paris, 7th November 1963

Top Secret

I. Schedule

I am honored to send you a short summary of my trip to China, which took place between 18th October and 5th November. During my trip to the People's Republic of China, the Chinese authorities showed, through their respect in all domains, the exceptional consideration that they felt they owed to a visitor entrusted by you. As they also wanted to respect the discretion that had been stipulated, each of these concerns was limited by the other, and their combination came across through subtle behavior nuances.

Having arrived in Beijing on the evening of 19th October, I was received on the morning of Wednesday 20th by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. That same evening, deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, took part in the dinner organized by the Institute of External Relations, but the welcome toast was given by M. Zhang Xiruo. The next day, I had a long talk with Chen Yi, and on Friday again with the two Ministers who hosted me for dinner. That ended a first series of meetings.

The 22nd and 23rd October were dedicated to a trip to Inner Mongolia and Shanxi province, a trip organized by the Chinese authorities in part for our pleasure and information, but certainly also to give them time to study the situation, to discuss it and to come up with an approach.

After returning to Beijing, the 26th and 27th October were dedicated to more meetings with the two Ministers, together or separately. Our meetings took place in my own residence, where I hosted M. Chen Yi for dinner, and they were not mentioned by the press. On 27th October, my wife and I hosted in Beijing, at the Great Hall of the People, our farewell dinner, which included the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, and where M. Zhou Enlai even gave a reply to my toast. They accompanied us for an official audience with President of the Republic Liu Shaoqi.

It had been planned, by a sudden change of the program, that I would spend my last two available days in Shanghai. We headed there on 28th October via a special plane, and M. Zhou Enlai and M. Chen Yi joined me that evening. After a last conference on the Saturday morning, we had an official visit with President Mao Zedong, again accompanied by my two usual interlocutors. That evening, they insisted on seeing me so to expose their views on the Sino-Indian dispute.

I want to add that if, as this schedule suggests, many long and repeated meetings were necessary, they only amounted to about fifteen hours. The Chinese leaders constantly gave me an impression of clarity, of good faith and good will, without any hint of what some refer to as 'exotic knick knack'. We left Shanghai on 3rd November by special plane for Kunming, from which we headed to Rangoon on 5th November via the direct Sino-Burmese line.

II. Approaching the Problem

Even before my first contact at the governmental level, I could not doubt that the Chinese leaders considered my visit as an event of great political importance and from which they expected important and imminent consequences. Moreover, Zhou's representative, who welcomed me at the border, had broached the subject of our political relations after barely fifteen minutes and even before we had left the station's waiting room. Furthermore, the mayor of Guangzhou who hosted us for dinner—which is already striking since the duties of representation are generally the role of deputies—had made, in his toast, a clear hint to the political, economic and cultural relations between our two countries, which would be unthinkable without formal instructions from the top.

However, I think that the Chinese leaders were perplexed by the exact extent of my mission, until the moment where they read your letter, which caused a shock among them. They afterwards expressed with insistence, I would nearly say with emotion, the honor they felt because of the attitude you displayed towards them and because of the content of your message. They did not fail to share their admiration for you; you should already be aware of this.

After this reading, the question of diplomatic relations was naturally the center of our focus; it was nearly the sole subject of our discussions. M. Zhou Enlai easily jumped on the expression: all domains. He wondered if he should understand it as including the political relations between the two states. I answered that the clarity of the French language meant there were no doubts in this instance. This led to the question of how we envisaged to improve these political relations. I replied that we hoped, on the condition of reciprocity, for the establishment of official diplomatic relations. I reminded them of the indications that had been given in this respect and from their side. I added, in line with your instructions, that we were not petitioners and that we had no urgent reasons to modify the current state of affairs, while deploring the current anomaly.

M. Zhou Enlai confirmed the Chinese desire to restore diplomatic relations, while using oratory precautions that were similar to the ones that I had resorted to. I did not doubt that this was simply tactical (and noting that my interlocutors probably made the same observation about us). In fact, it was confirmed during all our meetings—and it is clear from their conclusion—that the Beijing government is very keen to normalize relations with Paris, and keen to do it as soon as possible.

However, those dispositions cannot be only attributed to the sole desire of ending their diplomatic isolation, because then we could not understand the attitude of the People's Republic of China towards England. The obvious preference shown towards us results from the independence of French policy, illustrated by all its positions. I brought up this theme in line with your instructions, and I found an already receptive audience.

Currently, China views three non-socialist powers—and with which it does not have normal diplomatic relations—as presenting a certain potential of sympathy: France, England, and Japan, but from this group only France escapes the subordination to America. Thus, we are the only ones who offer sufficient guarantees that make the complete normalisation of relations seem possible and desirable. They think the Sino-French rapprochement could have a good influence on England and Japan, and would push them to move away from the American circle of influence, at least for Asian problems. They also possibly hope that we could be a source of support of advice. The fact that after a long day, M. Zhou Enlai and M. Chen Yi chose to spend a whole evening speaking of the Indian problem seems quite significant.

From another point of view, those considerations explain both the absolute priority of the political problem in the mind of the Chi leaders, and the certainty they have that

there is a similar perspective on our side. The development of economic and cultural relations, or at least their normalization, only seems to interest them as a transitional stage, or more exactly a means of pressure, according to the precedents of the UAR [United Arab Republic] and Cuba, where the manipulation of a commercial delegation, or an information agency, helped to 'sicken' Taiwan's representation. In our case, the hints to these types of relations always meet with an approval of convenience. The subject was naturally discussed, it was even mentioned that if we came to exchange economic delegations, we would have to give them a sufficiently official character. But obviously, their heart is not into this. Our interlocutors did not believe for a moment that General de Gaulle could take a strong interest in increasing the volume of our commercial exchanges, and as for the precedents of Cuba and the UAR, they believe—or seem to believe—that France is too big a power, and General de Gaulle too important a statesman, for such expedients to be used.

To sum up, they intensely want to renew with us, and they are convinced that the initiative of the head of state, sending to them a political personality, means that we are also inclined towards this innovation. They thus tried, during our meetings, to come up with procedures susceptible to reconcile the demands on which they cannot compromise with our point of view, which they understand well, on what can and cannot be accepted.

III. Analysis of the Discussion

From the moment where we noted a reciprocated desire to restore official relations, and in the case where such a situation would happen, the Chinese concerns can be organized along 4 categories:

1. The question of the two Chinas, which I do not need to elaborate on;
2. Taiwan's status, and the eventual creation of a Republic on that territory;
3. Restoring the rights of the People's Republic of China and its seat at the UN;
4. The existence and the future of the representations of Taiwan in Paris and of Paris in Taiwan.

As a prerequisite I mentioned the following points to my interlocutors:

That if we indeed wished to establish normal diplomatic relations, we were not petitioners; that, as a consequence, this normalisation could not include a negotiation as such, but only an exchange of information and reciprocated clarifications, which was the purpose of my mission; that the decision to be taken could include no prerequisite condition, which would go against our dignity and incompatible with our desire not to be a petitioner; that, in case of success, the protocol notifications should be simultaneous; that these notifications had to be pure and simple; that they could not include on the part of the People's Republic of China any question or condition, even if they were not presented as suspensive; that, to speak in more concrete terms, we could not take the risk of finding ourselves in the uncertain and ridiculous position of the Sino-British relations; I add by the way that the Chinese took the initiative on this point and always assured me that renewing such an experience was not desirable for them.

That said, I declared that I was instead willing, since I had the mandate, to examine with them the normal consequences of the establishment of diplomatic relations for the problems that they were concerned with. I underlined that we envisaged such an innovation in our relations with the value and scale that it includes, which could only

be determined by implementing the rules of international public law.

We would be completely aware, if we decided to recognize the Beijing government, of the obligations that this decision would entail for us on the natural and legal level. We do not and would not intend to hide from such implications. It is important to consider if the implementation such a principle could in reality sufficiently appease the apprehensions of our partners. I thought that it was the case.

1. As for the two Chinas thesis, I said that I could not quite understand the danger that our interlocutors feared, to the extent that we were concerned and within the frame of the planned approach. In fact, no one has really defined what these two Chinas would be. In regard to intentions, it is not at the moment that we are making a gesture toward Beijing that one could ascribe treacherous designs to us that we had never had until now and associate us with undertakings, supposing they are real, that we have already avoided. Finally, in regard to the law, the situation, as our partners never cease to remind us, with in addition the guarantee of Marshal Jiang Jieshi whose views on this point are absolutely similar to theirs, is clear and unambiguous. There cannot be a coexistence of two legitimate authorities for the same territory and population. The indivisibility of sovereignty is one of the fundamental notions of civil law. Our recognition of the People's Republic of China will render obsolete, ipso facto, the recognition of any other legitimate authority making a claim to the same sovereignty, toward the territory and population that are effectively under the authority of the newly recognized state. This consequence will fully apply toward the said Republic of China (Taiwan) without it being necessary to formalize any such measure (this latter point will be covered later).

2. The question of 'Taiwan's status' is quite different. My interlocutors mentioned several times the reasons that seem to justify for them the affiliation of this island to the overall Chinese territory. I indicated that I was not interested in objecting to this point, but that question was outside our competence, and we did not pretend to decide it. In fact, we only need to point out that there is no current problem with Taiwan's status, since the Taipei authorities paradoxically agree the Beijing ones to eliminate the existence of a Taiwanese state. It thus cannot be a question for us of recognizing, currently, a Taiwanese Republic, since this Republic has not managed to define itself. If, in the future, the Chinese leaders fear American machinations on this subject, it does not seem judicious for us to add further elements of complication and uncertainty to our already delicate decisions. All that we can say is that the normalization of relations between Beijing and Paris could only make us more favorable, in any case, to the positions and the interests of a power that we have stopped ignoring. This conclusion was tacitly admitted, and this issue was no longer on the agenda in the last phase of the meetings.

3. As for the UN, the solution seems to follow logically from 1. The recognition of the People's Republic as China's legitimate government normally leads one to consider as justified its claims to the rights and seat which had been attributed during the creation of the UN to a state with the same name and content. In addition, given that some countries, who only have incomplete or truncated relations with the People's Republic of China, have recently voted in favor of this restitution, it is not conceivable that France, in the case of a full normalization and exchange of ambassadors, could stay away from such a position. How could we do less than Britain if we had obtained more? I thus felt that, either legally or politically, I could not take a quibbling position on this subject.

4. The thorniest discussion had to do with the reciprocated representations in Paris and Taipei. In line with your instructions, I refused to take any engagements on this issue: be it in regard to notifying the Taiwanese authorities of a withdrawal of recognition as the Republic of China; be it on the issue of expelling the Taiwanese representation in Paris; or be it on the issue of calling back our own representation. I indicated, in line with your instructions, that our resistance on this subject resulted

from concerns about decorum and processes, and not political intrigue.

It is undeniable that the recognition of the People's Republic of China will affect the character of these relations, but I indicated that we could allow these to evolve empirically. To the courteous complaint that I was lacking in clarity, I replied that even the clearest minds had to be able to create at times some dark zones. When finally asked in a precise manner on the possibility of keeping relations on a consular level, I added that we maintained the option to act in this way; I also mentioned the example of our delegation in North Vietnam.

I thought that our meetings could have ended early at this point, since it is England's maintaining of a meaningless consular agent which has led it to refuse a complete normalization of diplomatic relations. After some thoughts, my interlocutors decided to go beyond this and to step back to a particular approach, which was in line with their wishes and probably their predictions. If the Taipei authorities took the initiative to withdraw—or reduce—their representation in Paris, would France proceed with a withdrawal—or the corresponding reduction—of its own representation? I felt that I could, without any inconveniences, give a positive answer. A different attitude on our part in this envisaged situation would indeed be unthinkable, if not in law according to international customs.

This analytical part of our meetings went on during my two successive trips in the capital. On 31st October, on the eve of our departure from Beijing, the debate was over. Our interpretations presented three points of agreement: China's unity; the legitimacy of its claims to the UN; the reciprocity in our relations with Taiwan in case of a spontaneous break from the Taipei government. On the other points (future status of Taiwan, maintaining of representations), there was no agreement and it seemed pointless to continue the discussion.

M. Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi told me they would think about it and they would mention their points of views in Shanghai. I assumed, without any other clue, that they had already determined their positions, but that they wanted to chat with President Mao Zedong.

IV. Proposal of the Chinese Government

When we restarted our talks in Shanghai, the Chinese Ministers announced that they were ready to hand me a precise proposal from their government, taking my observations into account. This proposal was first expressed orally, then examined through a note given to me by M. Zhou Enlai, and he invited me to review the draft. This note, which is a unilateral document and destined to remain secret, will be placed as an annex with this report. I still think it is necessary to summarize here the elements as they surfaced in our meetings.

The first part of the Chinese proposal concerns the procedure. The Beijing government envisages, in line with the viewpoint I expressed, 1) that this procedure be reduced to a simple exchange of notes, 2) that these notes be published simultaneously, and 3) that they come immediately into being, followed by an exchange of Ambassadors to avoid the English type of procrastinations.

If we are ready to accept the Chinese proposal, we will just need to address such a communication via the normal channel (Bern Embassy). The response from the Beijing government would not include conditions, questions or comments. It would only mention the following qualification: 'as sole legal government representing the Chinese people'—expression which seems to me not only acceptable, but fortunate, since it puts the emphasis on the people and does not decide the contentious territorial questions.

The second part of the Chinese proposal relates to the tacit agreement which would, hypothetically, exist between the parties on the interpretation of the consequences of this normalization. The Beijing leaders show the greatest trust in the French authorities and are not asking for a correspondence. Their own note will not be made public. The sole fact that we would engage in the procedure mentioned above would mean that there was no misunderstanding on the three points evoked. If this is not the case, we would just need not to initiate the official mechanism.

The three points in question are those I listed when relating the conclusion of our meetings: exclusive representation, restoration in the UN, reciprocity in a case of a break from Taiwan. I think it is futile to reproduce here the whole text in the note. As for the wording, it seemed preferable for me to limit my observations to the points where the formulations could affect the content.

1. In the preamble, the initial draft indicated that I had put forward, on your behalf, the proposal of restoring diplomatic relations. I did not accept this description, which was not in line with reality, and the formula 'expressed the desire' was used instead. Moreover, in the following sentence, where the initial draft stated that the Chinese government 'lets it known that it shares the same desire', I corrected it to 'confirms', which corresponds to the reciprocated character of our own intentions.

2. In the first indent of paragraph III, after the first segment of the sentence that went: 'The Government of the French Republic will only recognize the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government representing the Chinese people', I removed the primitive expression that said 'and will not recognize this quality for', as it would have implied a voluntary stand on our part, and it seemed more appropriate to only mention a legal and automatic effect.

Moreover, the sentences used in the note are not always the ones I would have chosen, but I thought, considering the nature of the text, that I should leave the responsibility of the drafting to the authors, as long as it did not include any distortions and that the style mishaps did not present any real disadvantages. The typical example is the one at the beginning of the paragraph 3, where there is a mention of a 'tacit agreement' between M. Zhou Enlai and M. E. Faure. This expression is of course wrong, as it is a formal agreement...for what would be a tacit agreement—but re-engaging the discussion for such nuances did not seem to be sufficiently important.

Of course, I told my interlocutors that at this moment, the coming decision belonged only to General de Gaulle, and that I could not prejudge the reply that would be given to the formal proposal of the Chinese government. I think personally that the leaders of the People's Republic of China have adopted an entirely conciliatory position, and I do not see how we could ask them for concessions or a withdrawal from the defined position. How can we suppose that they consider themselves in any other way but as the sole legal government of the Chinese people? How could they not envisage that the recognition of their state authority should lead, in regard to the UN, to the rights attached to this authority, when some governments, which are not as welcomed as we are, do not put forward any reserves on this point? Finally, what would be our interest in maintaining ties with the Taiwan authorities, if they took the initiative of breaking them?

None of these points of 'tacit agreement' could be usefully undermined now or later. As for the form, it is probably superfluous to underline with what scrupulous care they took into account our views. As a whole, a comparison between the proposal made to use and the jurisprudence maintained toward England dispenses us from any other development.

Likely, this behavior can be explained, as said above, by the desire of the Chinese to renew with us and maybe they are keener than we are. But from this desire and this haste, incidentally stimulated by the major impression that they felt following your initiative, it would be stubborn to deduce that they can accept anything or even that they would accept at any time what they are offering today. The appeal of your independent policy, the security they find in our non-participation in the intrigue they fear the most, cannot in any case lead them to fall in the 'trap' of the 'two Chinas'. Since they do not ask anything else from us that the moral certainty of having being heard, it is hard to see what would be the object of a negotiation and what would be the logic of a refusal. We took a fair account of these intentions and the reactions of our partners when the decision was taken to open a dialogue.

So your predictions have proven correct, you can now collect the fruits of a long meditation, at the moment you chose and it appears that it was the most favorable. "You arrive on time" Mao told me when he welcomed me in Shanghai. I respectfully emit the wish that this whole collection of complex facts, of which you are the sole judge, will allow you to conclude a step whose historical benefits are suggested by all clues.

New Delhi, 7th November 1963