

Interview With Chinese Television Journalists in Beijing

1989-02-26

China-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, I'm sure millions of Chinese people are watching this program now. I wonder if you would like to say a few words to them first.

The President. Well, I do have an opening statement, but first let me thank you for this unique opportunity. It's a great honor for me to be the first American President to speak to the Chinese people in a live broadcast. And I feel as if I were talking to old friends who, while out of sight, have never, never been out of heart and mind.

Fourteen years ago, Barbara and I came to your beautiful land when I was, as you said, Chief of the United States Liaison Office. And for us, returning to Beijing is a homecoming. Our work here was a source of great personal satisfaction, a happy, challenging time in our lives. And we actually went to church here; indeed, our daughter was baptized in our faith here. And we rode bicycles down the hutongs [narrow streets] of Beijing and came to have a general feeling of affection for the Chinese people. And we knew then that the relationship that we would establish between our two nations would be a special one indeed.

And we were right. Today the bridges that started with the Shanghai communique years ago -- today that relationship has joined our peoples together in friendship and respect. And our two countries continue to weave an increasingly rich fabric of relations through our expanding trade and cultural and scientific exchange. American students study at many of your finest universities, and we welcome thousands of Chinese students and researchers to educational institutions in the United States. The understanding and friendship that these students have developed will only help to improve and deepen relations between our two countries in the years ahead.

I've spoken to the American people about a new breeze blowing in the world today. And there's a worldwide movement toward greater freedom: freedom of human creativity and freedom of economic opportunity. And we've all begun to feel the winds of change sweep us toward an exciting and challenging new century. These winds -- new, sometimes gentle, sometimes strong and powerful. China was one of the first nations to feel this new breeze, and like a tree in a winter wind, you've learned to bend and adapt to new ways and new ideas and reform.

Many challenges lie before our two nations. And together, we must find political solutions to regional conflicts. We must foster global growth. And together, in order to make life better for future generations, we must seek solutions to worldwide concerns, such as our planet's environment, the threat to all people from international terror, the use and spread of chemical and biological weapons, and international drug trafficking. I know your leaders share with me a determination to solve these and other problems, and

as President of the United States, I look forward to continuing to work closely with them as I have done in the past.

The Americans and Chinese share many things, but perhaps none is more important than our strong sense of family. Just a few weeks ago, Barbara and I were blessed by a new grandchild. And when I think of her and I think of the beautiful children of China, my commitment to peace is renewed and reaffirmed.

I am confident that when future generations of Chinese and Americans look back upon this time they'll say that the winds of change blew favorably upon our lands. Thank you for your friendship, your hospitality, and the many warm memories of this wonderful country that Barbara and I take with us as we return tomorrow to the United States. Thank you all.

Q. Mr. President, you've been in office for just a month, and many people are probably surprised that you've decided to come to China so soon. Why now?

The President. Now because, you see, I view the relationship between China and the United States as highly significant, as one of the very most important relationships that we have. And so, it has a lot to do with bilateralism, with our trade and our cultural exchanges and what I said here about the children. But it's more than that. It really has, because of China's importance and ours, a lot to do with world peace. And so, before much time went by, I wanted to reaffirm the importance that the United States places on this bilateral relationship, and I wanted to pledge to the Chinese leaders -- and I've met the top four leaders in the last day and a half -- that this relationship will grow and it will prosper. And we have economic problems, and China has some. But together we're going to solve them, and we're going to move forward.

Q. Well, this is your second day in China. How do you assess your time here? What specifically have you achieved on this trip?

The President. Well, really it's been a period to -- just in that short period of time -- to visit with the Chinese leadership and Chairman Deng Xiaoping and others -- Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng, Chairman Yang -- all of these men giving a lot of their time to explain the reforms in China, the new directions that China is taking in world affairs. We had an interesting exchange on the forthcoming visit of General Secretary Gorbachev coming here. And it is important that they understand what I'm thinking in terms of the Middle East or the subcontinent or our relations with the Soviet Union on arms control, and it's important I understand theirs. So, it hasn't been a visit that has three points on an agenda. It's a visit with a much broader perspective and a reaffirmation of a relationship that's strong.

Q. Mr. President, you know perhaps as well as anyone about the development of relations between your country and China. How would you say that relationship contributes to world peace and development?

The President. Well, I think it contributes a lot, because in the first place, we in the United States have a disproportionate responsibility for discussions on strategic weapons, for example, and we want to go forward with the Soviet Union, in this instance, on negotiations. But we don't want to do that in a way that would jeopardize the interests of any other country. And so, in that one area, we can have discussions with the Chinese, just as our Secretary of State, Jim Baker, had with the European leaders.

Another area is the economy. And we have some economic problems at home, and I wanted to assure the Chinese leaders that I am going to do my level best to get our deficit down. The Chinese people might say, Well, what in the world does that have to do with me living in Beijing or down in Shanghai or out further in the countryside? Well, the economies of the world are interlocked in a way. And if I can do my job properly, that might mean lower interest rates. And what does that mean to the average man on the street in China? That might mean that eventually his goods come to him at a lower price. So, I just come back to the fact that the visit is a chance to explore in depth the complicated international relationships and to build on this bilateral relationship.

China-U.S. Trade

Q. Well, it's said there's vast potential in strengthening both the economic and technological cooperation between China and the United States. How do we best tap that potential, and how do we overcome problems such as the restrictions on the transfer of technology?

The President. Well, in the first place, I had an opportunity just a minute ago -- I was almost late for your program because I was talking to Zhao Ziyang, a very impressive leader, about the economy and about reforms. We congratulate the Chinese leaders in the steps they've taken towards economic reform.

Now, in terms of something technical like technological exchange, I made clear to the Chinese leaders, particularly in a conversation with Li Peng, that we are prepared to go the extra mile in terms of investment, in terms of business, exports and imports. You know, when I was here in China 15 years ago, total trade was 0 million. And now, depending on how one accounts for it, we would say we would use a figure of billion. So, we're going to move forward. We will advance technology to China as much as we possibly can under what is known as the COCOM [Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Security Controls] arrangement. There are some highly sensitive, highly sophisticated military technologies that I'm not even sure China is interested in, but that we are prohibited from exporting under the law. Having said that, we have exported some highly sophisticated technology to China, and as President, I want to continue to do that. And that will benefit the life of the average Chinese citizen.

We're in an information society in many ways in the United States, and clearly that is going to come to China -- computer knowledge and education techniques that are coming to the average Chinese kid from computers. And we've been blessed by advanced technology, and now we want to share it as much as we can.

Q. Well, you know there are reforms in China right now -- --

The President. I know it.

Q. -- -- and the Chinese Government is trying to attract more foreign investment. So, does your administration have or plan to have any specific measures to encourage American businesses to invest in China?

The President. Well, we had a chance to talk about that here today with the Chinese leaders, and I did point out to them that there are certain things that we'd like to see China move forward on that would enhance further investment here. I'd like to see an investment treaty between the two countries of some sort -- an agreement, not a treaty but a bilateral agreement on trade. We -- like we do not just with China but many other countries -- talk about copyright and patent protection, and yet I find on this visit that China is moving forward with a new patent code and now drafting copyright legislation, which would be very helpful.

So, there are some artificial barriers. And the good thing about a visit like this is we can sit and talk to the leaders in a dispassionate way. And where they disagree with me, they will tell me, and where I disagree with them, I'm obliged to tell them. And that's what a good frank relationship can do.

But I told them that I must work to get the budget deficit in the United States now, because that does have an adverse impact on international interest rates. So, there are things that we can do, and there were things that I've asked China to do in terms of facilitating business. Sometimes I think your country is as bad as mine is on red tape. And to get the best flow of investment, China needs to do better on red tape, and so do we. It's a two-way street.

Q. Well, I've got more questions -- --

The President. Go ahead.

Q. -- -- but the time is up.

The President. Oh, dear.

Q. And I'm afraid you have another important activity right after this, so we have to end this interview right now.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's been a pleasure to have you here.

The President. Well, this has been a unique opportunity. And let me just conclude my part of your broadcast by again saying as President of the United States, the growing relationship between China and the United States is vital to my country. It is important to

my country. And I hope it will benefit the people in China. I am confident that it will, and I know it will benefit world peace as well.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, ma'am.

Note: The interview began at 6:02 p.m. at the CCTV Studios. In his remarks, the President referred to Zhao Ziyang, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party; Deng Xiaoping, Chairman of the Central Military Commission; Li Peng, Premier of the State Council, and Yang Shangkun, President of China. Following his remarks, the President traveled to Seoul, Republic of Korea.