

# Rockefeller's Trip Reflects the Man

By Lou Cannon

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The strengths and weaknesses of Vice President Rockefeller were vividly demonstrated last week on a grueling 17,000-mile round trip to one of the last pro-America bastions in Asia.

Heading the U.S. delegation to the funeral of Chiang Kai-shek, Rockefeller impressed his Taiwanese hosts with his sense of ceremonial occasion and his wide-ranging knowledge of Chinese art.

But the 4½-day trip, Rockefeller's second mission to a foreign funeral in less than three weeks—in late March he flew to King Faisal's funeral in Saudi Arabia—left the 66-year-old Vice President physically exhausted and emotionally drained.

It also put him in some trouble with the White House for his statements that Communist advances in Southeast Asia and elsewhere have the makings of a 1976 campaign issue.

"The last 48 hours have been for me the most trying or difficult emotionally that I've ever experienced," Rockefeller said soon after boarding Air Force Two for the return flight.

The Vice President showed his years on the trip to the funeral of the last World War II Allied leader.

On the trip to Taiwan the Vice President slept through the refueling stop at Guam, much to the disappointment of a welcoming delegation led by Lt. Gov. Rudolfo G. Sablan.

And on the return 18-hour flight Rockefeller irritably turned aside reporters who asked him his reactions to the Taiwan visit.

"How could I possibly discuss it?" the Vice President said.

Aides said Rockefeller was tired. He also may have been smarting from communiques sent him both by the White House and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger questioning Rockefeller's statement in an airplane interview that there are political possibilities inherent in the evacuation of Americans from Vietnam.

"Let's say 2,000 Americans or 3,000, half of them are killed, half of them are taken captive," Rockefeller had said. "That raises a lot of issues."

A White House source confirmed that that statement caused concern because the President has been trying to make the point that the administra-

tion is not attempting to place political blame.

The source said a message about the interview had been sent to Rockefeller but would not disclose its contents.

Getting into political trouble on trips taken on the President's behalf is nothing new for Rockefeller.

On his first trip in behalf of the Ford administration, a speech at a New Jersey political fund-raiser in January, Rockefeller said Congress would be to blame for the collapse of South Vietnam if it failed to provide the military aid requested by the President.

"If we don't and the Communists take over and there's a million people liquidated, we know where the responsibility will lie," Rockefeller said.

He told reporters he had discussed his speech, the contents of which were not announced ahead of time, at a luncheon with Kissinger the same day.

The next day Rockefeller called White House press secretary Ron Nessen and told him the idea for the speech had come from the President, at a Cabinet meeting, not from Kissinger.

On his next trip, a visit to Detroit a month later, Rockefeller became irritated with reporters who questioned him about his political plans, saying it was inappropriate for him to discuss them.

Then on April 2, returning from the funeral of a New York state legislator, Rockefeller told reporters that "it really is too late" for the United States to do anything about the Communist advance in South Vietnam.

He later tried to explain away his remarks by saying that he had been misunderstood and that more military aid might be essential if Saigon forces could regroup.

But if Rockefeller has been something less than the accomplished political spokesman for the administration that President Ford expected, he has proved an appropriate diplomatic representative abroad.

In Taipei the Vice President made a big hit at the National Museum, where his knowledgeable interest in Chinese jades and bronzes delighted his guides. Afterward, Rockefeller observed to a reporter that he had been collecting Chinese objects of art since 1930.

Speaking with Madame Chiang Kai-shek and with Chiang's successors, Rocke-



NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER  
... "symbol of America"

feller also struck the desired note of sympathetic concern.

"It's almost as good as having the President," said one U.S. official familiar with the Taiwan government. "Rockefeller's name is known everywhere. He's a symbol of America."

The America that Rockefeller symbolizes, understands and represents is an internationalist nation dedicated to commitments around the globe.

The Vice President expressed his view of the nation's world role in the interview aboard Air Force Two en route to Taiwan.

After telling the three reporters who accompanied him that "the rapid advance of Communist takeover by military force and subversion" had "the makings of political issues" for 1976, Rockefeller was asked to define these issues.

"Who else can preserve freedom in the world, who has the strength and the capacity, economically, militarily but the United States?" Rockefeller responded.

"There is no other major force left in the world that has the capacity except the United States . . . If the United States doesn't do this, at what point do we defend our own freedom and our own liberties and our own sense of self respect for human dignity to preserve the values that have been the basis for our whole revolution and history?"

It was statements like that which helped cement an already existing personal bond between Rockefeller and Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), another member of the delegation.

Goldwater, more than anyone, was responsible for Rockefeller's presence on

the trip. The Arizona senator had complained to President Ford that Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz, who originally was named to head the delegation, was of insufficient stature to represent the United States at Chiang's funeral.

Rockefeller and Goldwater were bitter political foes in 1964, with Goldwater winning out to become the Republican presidential nominee. But the two men said in separate interviews that they see eye to eye on foreign policy.

Goldwater, who fears a revival of American isolationism, praised Rockefeller's performance as head of the delegation and said with a smile that he would be "very glad" to "take him around and introduce him to some of my evil conservative friends."

"Rocky and I see more eye to eye on foreign policy than I and Ford do," Goldwater said. "The Vice President's a very valuable man in the party."