

"It Looks Like a Postcard"

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The Chinese Sayings of President Richard Nixon

By Stanley Karnow

AFTER YEARS of exposure to the quotations of Communist Party Chairman Mao Tsetung, the Chinese were given the chance last week to hear the sayings of President Nixon and his wife Pat. The experience for them may not have been educational, but it was certainly different.

For in contrast to Mao's aphorisms, with their heavy accent on ideology, the President's casual remarks as he toured the sights of Peking, Hangchow and Shanghai were simple and direct, and they must have had a good deal of appeal for Mr. and Mrs. Public Q. Wang.

Mr. Nixon uttered his first important informal comments during his week in China on Thursday morning, when he and Pat and Secretary of State William Rogers and Marshal Yeh Chien-ying and a flock of reporters drove 30 miles northwest of Peking to see one of the seven wonders of the world, the Great Wall.

The President gazed upon the wall as it wound through the brown Loess mountains into the horizon. Centuries of travelers had marveled at the sight, and so did the President. "I think that you would have to conclude that this is a great wall," he said.

The newsmen present carefully preserved his observation, and the White House xeroxed copies of it for those who were absent.

The President was so moved by the sight of the wall, in fact, that he went on to say that it had been worth traveling 16,000 miles to see, then, turning to Rogers, he asked: "Do you agree, Mr. Secretary?"

The secretary had a ready answer. "I certainly do, Mr. President," he replied. "It is really a tremendous privilege we have had."

As if he did not quite trust Rogers, the President wheeled around to the reporters on hand for further confirmation of his opinion: "Let me ask the members of the press, do you think it was worth coming?"

The newsmen, like Chinese schoolchildren reciting a lesson, responded in unison: "Yes, Mr. President."

THUS REASSURED, Mr. Nixon was inspired to offer his views on the spectacles the Chinese had shown him on the two previous evenings. They were "fantastic," he said.

The ballet entitled "The Red Detachment of Women," which depicted an uprising by the Communists against landlords and their Kuomintang henchmen, was described by the President as "great." Its revolutionary theme constituted a "powerful message," said Mr. Nixon.

He was especially impressed, the President said, when the theatrical Communists slaughtered the landlord and his supporters. The smell of gunpowder even floated into the audience, he recalled, adding that "you had a feel of realism that was quite vivid."

Not long afterward, at the recently excavated tombs of the Ming emperors, Mr. Nixon noted that the ancients had "spoons

as well as chopsticks." Pat Nixon, observing a showcase of ceremonial headresses made of gold and set with precious stones, exclaimed: "Isn't that something."

Those comments, like the President's remarks at the Great Wall, were duly recorded by reporters and published by the Peking White House press office to pass into posterity.

MR. NIXON'S eloquence was further animated the next day as he toured the splendors of Peking's Forbidden City, once the seat of imperial Chinese power and now a museum. A snowfall had blanketed the exquisite landscape of antique buildings and ponds within the city's red walls.

Approaching one of the buildings, the

'... And when the Tartars threatened to conquer China, Emperor Shi-Hwang-ti decided—Oh, I almost forgot, China proper extends from 20° to 40° north latitude and the Luktchun basin in Sinkiang is 400 ft. below sea level and Charlie Chan's last movie was in 1914, anyway, the emperor decided . . .'



Darcy. Copyright 1972, Newsday.

President introduced Chicago Tribune correspondent Aldo Beckman to Yeh Chien-ying. Then he paused, took in the scenery and said: "It snows like this in Chicago."

Inside the museum, Pat Nixon scrutinized the celebrated jade burial raiment in which the Han emperors were interred. The relics "must be worth a fortune," she said. The President underlined her remark. Addressing their guide, he said: "You ought to search everybody now to make sure they don't have anything in their pockets." That exchange, noted by Washington Star correspondent Henry Bradsher, was later engraved by the White House press office for future generations.

On Saturday afternoon, the President and

his party were in the lovely resort city of Hangchow, immortalized by Marco Polo. There, on a boat excursion around the lake, Mr. Nixon was apparently spellbound by the landscape of misty mountains that might have been the subject of an early Ming painting.

The President was so touched that, pointing out the sight to Premier Chou En-lai, he said that "it looks like a postcard." Chou stared at him blankly, perhaps having already seen many postcards. By Sunday it was Shanghai, where Chou toured the President through an exhibition of assorted Chinese export merchandise. The products included crankshaft-grinding machines, spiral bevel generators and other industrial prototypes.

What captivated the President, however, was a microscopic bit of ivory. Like a pinhead containing the Lord's Prayer, it was engraved with a verse by Mao Tse-tung entitled "Ode to the Plum Blossom." Mr. Nixon peered at the object through a magnifying glass, and said: "art is my weakness."

DELEGATED TO do more sightseeing than her husband, Mrs. Nixon gamely visited farms, factories and the Peking zoo, where she greeted a pair of panda bears with a friendly "Hi there". Hugh Sidey of Life magazine recorded her statement, which was distributed to newsmen by the White House.

The same day, Mrs. Nixon went to see the kitchen of the Peking Hotel, and the sights and smells uplifted her to new ambitions. When she and the President returned to Washington, she told the newsmen with her, she would have a reunion at the White House for all the new China hands. "I'll do the cooking and we'll have Chinese food," she promised.

On the way home aboard the President's airplane, Mrs. Nixon said that the trip to China had already given her "wonderful memories". She had been especially entranced by Chou En-lai. "He's a real charmer," she said. "He's a man who knows the world. He has a delightful sense of humor. We had some fun moments".

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