



Tom Braden

Root 3/7/72

President Overplays It on First

PRESIDENT NIXON can never let will enough alone. "This is the week that changed the world," he said of his China trip. Like the moon landing which became "the greatest event since the Creation," the words diminished the deed.

Take the Nixon doctrine. A man might be able to regard it as a turning point in history if Mr. Nixon hadn't called it "the Nixon doctrine." James Monroe knew better. He let somebody else point out that what James Monroe had said was important.

The Nixon list of "first" and "historic" events stretches the meaning of hyperbole.

"I think it is significant to note," said Mr. Nixon, arriving in the Philippines, "that the first world capital that I am visiting after greeting the first man to set foot on the moon is Manila. Also the first Asian capital that I am visiting on this trip is Manila."

On the next day he was in Indonesia. "Now as I stand here today," he said, "I realize for the first time in history a President of the United States of America is visiting Indonesia." The next day he said, "This is the first time that I have

ever said goodbye to the people of this country."

"This is the first time that I, as President of the United States, have appeared before any legislative body in the whole world," he told the Bundestag in February of 1969, and that same month he remarked that "for the first time in history, a man occupying the office of President of the United States visited a session of the House of Commons."

"This is an historic occasion," he told the Romanians. "While this is not my first visit to your country, it is the first visit of a President of the United States to Romania, and the first state visit by an American President to a Socialist country or to this region of the continent of Europe."

History is made at home, too. "This is the first time in White House history that we have had an opportunity to see a dress rehearsal," he told a dinner audience for Bob Hope. And on a visit to New Jersey he remarked, "This is the first time in history that the President of the United States has ever spoken in Morris County."

In California, he invited Chief Justice Burger to dinner and told the guests,

"This is the first time that the new chief justice of the United States has ever attended a state dinner as chief justice."

To old people assembled at the White House for Thanksgiving, he pointed out that "This is really a very historic occasion. This is the biggest dinner ever held at the White House since this administration came to office." And to milk producers assembled in Chicago last September, Mr. Nixon said, "I have probably addressed more conventions than any American political figure and more audiences in America and in the world than any American political figure. This is the biggest convention and the biggest indoor crowd I have ever seen."

"This is the first time in the history of this administration that we have had the opportunity to receive the head of government of another country who is also a woman," he told Golda Meir of Israel.

It doesn't matter to Mr. Nixon whether he has to cope with a storm: "This is the worst storm that has ever been recorded in the 100 years of recording storms in the United States." Or with his own

Vice President: "Ladies and gentlemen, in the 190-year history of this country, tonight, here in the Waldorf-Astoria, this is the first time in the history of the United States that the President has substituted for the Vice President."

When everything is so important, nothing is.

© 1972, Los Angeles Times

first - 14 (includes first time in history - 4)

historic - 2

President of the United States - 6