

In Conservative San Diego, Nixon's Trip Is Traumatic

NYTimes

By EVERETT R. HOLLES

Special to The New York Times

FEB 26 1972

SAN DIEGO, Feb. 25—A retired vice admiral who spent two years on the Yangtze in the nineteen-thirties walked into the bar of the Admiral Kidd Club here the other evening. On the television screen President Nixon was exchanging toasts with Premier Chou En-lai in Peking.

"Turn that damn thing off—it's disgraceful!" he said, and strode out of the room.

Here in this palisade of palm trees and political conservatism, in Mr. Nixon's "lucky city," where he looks forward to being renominated for a second term at the Republican convention next August, his visit to the Communist leaders of China has evoked little cheering and considerable resentment.

A Cold Reaction

There has been a grudging fascination with the dramatic aspects of his journey. But, generally, San Diego's reaction has been about as reserved and lacking in enthusiasm as the cautious greeting the Chinese gave the President when he stepped from his plane in Peking last weekend.

Television stations here have started getting calls from viewers demanding to know when their favorite programs—canceled to make way for special Peking telecasts—were going to return.

Some of the most outspoken criticism of the President's trip has come from the large population of retired military officers, many of them "old China hands" whose homes are filled with Chinese art and furniture and who remember fondly the lush life in China's foreign compounds in bygone days.

Their complaints—and professed fears of a possible American loss of face in Asia—are shared by many other conservatives, including members of the right-wing California Republican Assembly, the more militantly anti-Nixon United Republicans of California and followers of the John Birch Society.

Thousands of round-robin letters have been sent by the Birch group to the White House protesting the President's dealing with "the murderous criminals" of Peking.

Turns off Broadcasts

Mrs. WARREN Vinton, pres-

ident of the Republican Women's Club of suburban La Mesa, is one of those who are openly bitter about the President's mission—so bitter in fact that she has stopped watching the Peking broadcasts.

"I just can't stand it anymore," she said. "It's shameful, doing business with those criminals."

She said perhaps half of the 5,000 women who belong to 42 Republican clubs in San Diego County agreed with her although many of them were remaining silent out of party loyalty.

A San Diego businessman who expects to vote again for Mr. Nixon despite his misgivings described the President's Peking visit as "a traumatic experience" for many conservatives.

"You must remember," he said, "that 20 years ago this was the heartland of the so-called China lobby and ever since that time we have been firm in our support of Chiang Kai-shek and Nationalist China."

'Shock to Nervous System'

"Furthermore, it was largely because of his strong anti-Communist principles that Richard Nixon, in 1968, had his biggest victory in the nation here and in neighboring Orange County. More than half of his national plurality of a half-million votes came from us.

"Now we are asked to do a 180-degree turnabout and make friends with the Red Chinese, at the expense of Taiwan and our other friends in Asia. First the United Nations ouster of Nationalist China, now this. It has been a tremendous shock to our nervous system and to our conscience."

While Mr. Nixon was being feted in Peking this week, a group of old China hands and their wives gathered at a dinner party at the Coast Boulevard home of Dr. and Mrs. Burt W. Aginsky, anthropologists who worked in China in 1936-37. The guests—retired Army and Marine Corps generals and colonels—took a generally dim view of Mr. Nixon's "I'm Not Sure Why He's There"

"I'm not sure just why he is over there," said Col. Ivan Yeaton, who knew Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai intimately when he was an American intelligence officer attached to the Communist headquarters in Yunan Province in 1945.

"If he went to talk peace, he's wasting his time. If he wants to make a deal, he's holding the short end of the stick. If he felt that an approach was necessary, he should have sent someone else—not Kissinger, but someone really tough."

Colonel Yeaton lived with Mr. Chou for a year and on the desk in his apartment study overlooking the Pacific is a large photograph of Chairman Mao, affectionately autographed.

Dr. Aginsky, formerly chairman of the anthropology department at City College of New York, agreed that it might have been a mistake for the President to go to Peking himself but he added: "Something like this had to come about.

You cannot continue to ignore 800 million people."

A retired vice admiral, A. E. Jarrell, who was stationed at Chefoo from 1927 to 1929, said: "Mr. Nixon led with his chin. The Chinese are going to make a lot of face out of his kowtowing to them, and I am afraid he's going to come away disappointed if not embarrassed."

Several younger persons, although more approving than their elders, looked upon the President's mission cynically as an election-year ploy.

"It's a gas," said Alex Taylor, a student at San Diego State College. "Imagine this guy who was blasting the Communists a few years ago going to visit them. He is not going to Peking for peace but to help himself get re-elected."

Dave Buchbinder, city editor of The Triton Times, a newspaper at the University of California in San Diego, disagreed.

"We need to talk to the Chinese," he said. "It's ridiculous for this country to go on ignoring one-third of the human race. That in itself makes the President's trip worthwhile, and he should be given credit for it."

Dr. Paul Saltman, vice chancellor of the University of California's San Diego campus, said he was "relatively joyous" that this country was trying to normalize relations with the mainland Chinese.

Chinese Wrote Nixon

Bolton Lee, who is Chinese and a dealer in Oriental jade, also was worried, that the President might lose face and wrote him about it several weeks ago. He received a letter of thanks.

"But everything went off just right," Mr. Lee said. "The first reception was dignified and sincere, and I knew then that after the first day or two the Nixons would be treated warmly."

Local Republican leaders, in the midst of preparations to make the Republican convention here next August a "patriotic spectacle" of affection for Mr. Nixon, are aware of the undertow of criticism, but they seek to minimize it.

Several White House aides, including Robert H. Finch and Herbert Klein, have made trips to San Diego with assurances that the President would neither "bargain away American interests nor abandon this country's friends."

Gov. Ronald Reagan came here following a White House visit and reported that "the President told me personally that if the Red Chinese tried to take over Taiwan, the United States will defend our ally."

The Governor added that if it were a Democratic President in China, "alarm certainly would be justified, but this is a Republican President and a fighter against Communism."

Edward Nichols, editorial-page director of the strongly conservative and pro-Nixon San Diego Union, agreeing that there was substantial opposition here to the President's journey, said that nearly two-thirds of an unusually heavy volume of letters from readers were critical of Mr. Nixon's trip.