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In the Spell of John Mitchell

By Russell Baker

When the proposal for President Nixon's China visit was first made nobody told the President.

President Nixon was famous for disliking Communism, especially in China, and Henry Kissinger knew that if he ever learned people were sitting around the White House discussing visits like that, he would blow the lid off the whole project.

This, of course, would have endangered his chance to be re-elected, which was a lot more important than whether Chiang Kai-shek got his feelings hurt.

Kissinger, therefore, decided to go ahead and set up the visit without involving the President.

Wearing an ill-fitting red wig provided by the C.I.A., Kissinger flew into Peking to discuss the trip with Chou En-lai. He said a lot of Americans with hundred-dollar bills want-

ed the President to visit China so he could be re-elected. Otherwise America would fall under the sway of George McGovern, who was soft on women's liberation.

Unfortunately, President Nixon was such a devout anti-Communist that he would blow the whistle on the whole idea and provoke damaging publicity in the media if he learned that he was involved in visiting China.

To get around this problem, Kissinger asked Chou if the Chinese would go along with an idea which Howard Hunt had come up with while rummaging through some psychiatric files.

Chou said to stop right there. He didn't want to be associated with anything that had been dreamed up by Hunt. It would probably involve sending Gordon Liddy to China wearing an ill-fitting Nixon wig provided by the C.I.A., Chou said.

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Kissinger said that was right.

Chou said forget it. China wanted the real Nixon or none at all, he said. If Nixon didn't want to come, he said, America would just have to put up with women's liberation for the next four years.

Back in Washington, Kissinger conferred and shredded with H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman. He told them that it might be best if he went to the President, told him about the China trip and asked him to consider it.

Haldeman and Ehrlichman protested that this would be a terrible mistake. There was no point in involving the President in matters of this sort. Besides, he had important things to think about.

Then one night Kissinger was tele-

phoned by a man named John Dean.

It has only been within the past week that President Nixon has learned he was actually in China last year, and he is said to be furious, although not at Professor Kissinger.

Once Dean entered the picture, White House people say, Kissinger obviously had no choice but to follow orders. Instead of throwing Kissinger out of the window as he should have done as soon as the word "Peking" was mentioned, Dean ordered the professor to arrange for the trip at the soonest possible point in time.

Details are still vague about how Dean managed to maneuver the President innocently through the long hours, which included several state banquets, conversations with Chou En-lai and a meeting with Chairman Mao. One rumor has it that Dean tricked the President with a story about inspecting some real estate for a pos-

sible Asian vacation White House. Another has it that the President was told he was actually in Taiwan.

With Dean's ingenuity it would have been child's play for him to deceive the President into believing that Chou En-lai was actually Chiang Kai-shek, that Mao Tse-tung was Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, and that the Great Wall of China was part of the Taiwan Disneyland.

In any event, the President is so alarmed by the discovery of the China visit that he has ordered a full investigation to find out where he has been and whom, if anybody, he has seen during the past two years.

He is said to suspect that he may even have gone to Russia, thanks to the perfidy of John Dean. Professor Kissinger is reluctant to trouble him with the facts of the matter. The President is a man with important things on his mind.