

December 3, 1975

POOL REPORT - POOL # 17 & #18 -- Agricultural Exhibition Hall and
Travel Pool -- Guest House #18 to Agricultural
Exhibition and return.

A "responsible person" at the Hall informed us before the President arrived that Ford was the first foreign head of state or government to visit it. The Hall was built in 1959. It is a large structure with green tile roof which you may have noticed on the east side of the road from the airport on the outskirts of town.

Ford arrived on schedule at 2:25 p.m. He was escorted by Wu Teh First Secretary of the Peking Communist Party Committee and Chairman of the Peking Revolutionary Committee. Most of the explanations of the exhibit were given by the Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Shao Peng. George Bush accompanied the President but none of the foreign policy types were there.

Ford came in briskly and looked like he planned to rush straight through the entrance hall which was dominated by a larger-than-life statue of Chairman Mao talking to a peasant family. His hosts stopped him and explained the statue to him, and Ford took off his overcoat to show a brown pin-striped suit with vest, brown tie, and white shirt.

The first display hall they entered featured the agricultural commune at Tachai, which is the prime exhibit in China of a poor rural area pulling itself up by its boot straps. Ford was told that in 1964 Chairman Mao issued the call, "In agriculture, learn from Tachai."

A girl guide explained to the President a ten-square-foot model of the Shensi of Province eroded hillside which had been terraced into high-yielding farm fields by the people of the Tachai commune. "Where does the water come from for irrigation?" the President asked. He was told it came from a reservoir. Pulling his hands out of his trouser pockets he waved them across the model and said, "It runs through the whole system?" Yes, he was told.

As he was looking at the numerous photos, charts, and other exhibits about Tachai, the President pulled his glasses out of a coat pocket and put them on. But when he rounded a corner of the exhibition case and came within range of cameras, he immediately took them off. Several times later it was noted that he put on his glasses to study displays but took them off again as soon as he became aware of television lights being turned on or still cameras flashing at him.

In another section of the hall showing how other small agricultural areas had followed Tachai's example, the President met half a dozen girls in colorful dress of regional national minorities, including girls from Tibet and Sinkkiang provinces. "How far are they away from their homes when they're here?" the President asked. The answer came back through the translator as, "almost half a year." A few Chinese officials chuckled, but Ford unblinkingly moved on as if his question had been satisfied.

Looking at three large stuffed hogs, the President asked, "Are these a special brand (sic) or special types?" He did not seem to get an answer. Instead his attention was called to a stuffed white Peking duck in a nearby case which he called "very beautiful".

The President left at 3:27 p.m., 12 minutes late, after telling his hosts that "it was a real pleasure to see it." Your pool reporter thought he looked bored most of the time.

HENRY BRADSHER/WASH. STAR

Pool #18 - Bob Schieffer of CBS reported the pool had an uneventful trip to and from the exhibition.

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