

Homecoming

President Nixon deserves great credit for his initiative in reversing this country's sterile and unrealistic policy toward China. While there will long be argument over the relative merits of summitry versus less spectacular diplomatic approaches, disagreements over the method cannot obscure the potential benefits to be derived from the President's journey to Peking.

But the goal of a new, rational relationship between the two nations was hardly brought closer by the excessive ceremonial panoply that was staged for the President's return to Washington. The production, which brought to a climax the super-spectacular TV atmosphere that characterized the entire trip, smacked more of the return of a triumphant potentate than of the successful end of a diplomatic mission.

The risk in Mr. Nixon's tendency toward hyperbole in word and imagery is that it demeans even real achievements and raises unreasonable expectations. The homecoming pageantry may have helped viewers forget the point of the President's own warning that he did not bring back any magic formula.

It would be better to keep in mind that the long march is still ahead. The Peking meetings have allowed American diplomacy to enter into the staging area, but the fanfares and the trumpets tend to give a tinny sound to what are, in fact, some solid if still limited accomplishments.