

Nixon's China Welcome Much Like Weather -- Not Exactly Warm *

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PEKING (AP) — President Nixon's welcome to the People's Republic of China was a lot like Peking's February weather, not exactly warm but several degrees above the frost level.

Shivering under a wan winter sun, a thin red line of officials witnessed the historic handshake that Nixon extended to Premier Chou En-lai as he came down the red carpeted steps from the Spirit of '76.

This was the hand that John Foster Dulles refused to shake at the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina, saying it was a hand that had "liquidated millions of Chinese."

After Nixon shook hands with other officials, he and Chou moved down the line to inspect the honor guard from the People's Revolutionary Army and Air Force.

Chairman Mao Tse-tung wasn't in the airport reception committee, but his pudgy countenance beamed down from the glass-walled airport terminal on the unfamiliar spectacle of an American flag flying at the same height as the five-starred flag of his people's republic.

A tall Tartar of a drum major in a fur cap raised aloft a long brass baton topped with a fluttering red flag and the Red Army band responded with The Star Spangled Banner, then followed with The Volunteers Song, the anthem of Red China.

Throughout the 15-minute airport ceremony, Mrs. Nixon in her Republican red cloth coat chatted through an interpreter with Mrs. Lin Chia mei, wife of the vice premier, who wore sensible worker's shoes and a Mao-type trouser suit.

Peking, where people power is always available, shows the warmth of its welcome by the masses of people turned out for a demonstration. On special occasions, like the birthday of the republic, the Chinese have been known to parade 3 million people

through Tien An Men Square in demonstrations that sometime take three days to pass the Gate of Heavenly Peace.

By these standards, Nixon's arrival in Peking was a lonely affair. Certainly there was

nothing like the half a million people who turned out to greet Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam in November.

During the 20-mile motorcade from the airport, only

handfuls of workers looked up from their chores in the wintry gray fields of the communes or peeked out through factory gates.

As the black limousines moved into the downtown

area, several thousand people could be seen at least a block away in the streets behind the central market and the new railway station. There were no barricades, but the police apparently were keeping them

back.

Tien An Men square, the huge concourse in front of the Forbidden City of the emperors that can hold half a million people, had several hundred workers and shop-

pers, mostly on bicycles during their noon lunch break. There were no choruses of schoolchildren to sing oct revolutionary songs or bands ringing cymbals and gongs as there were for recent visitors.

In visiting his 71st foreign country, Nixon probably never had a less demonstrative welcome. On the applause meter, Genghis Khan may have gotten a higher rating going past the Gate of Heavenly Peace.

*by Hugh Hulligan
(see SPExaminer, same date, China file).