

William F. Buckley Jr.

President's Moral Courage

PEKING — At the banquet here I saw personal diplomacy, and I say it won't work. But let it be said that Richard Nixon tried. Everyone could see him in the large banquet hall, but I saw him not alone from the advantage of being seated only twenty yards away.

I watched him through binoculars after his remarks, raising his glass to toast Chou En-lai and the three or four Chinese officials seated at his table.

THEN — TO THE SURPRISE of everyone and the consternation of the Secret Service — he strode purposefully to the three surrounding tables and there greeted Chinese official after Chinese official, his face red with the sweat of quite genuine idealism, bowing, smiling warmly, touching each glass.

He looked altogether noble, flushed with the righteousness of great purpose. The two dozen Chinese — old generals, commissars, politicians — were quite visibly startled, first at being approached at all, then at being wooed so ardently.

Make no mistake about the moral courage all this required. It is unreasonable to suppose that anywhere in history have a few dozen men congregated who have been responsible for greater human mayhem than the gentlemen at the banquet, instruments and mentors of Mao Tse-tung.

Among the pamphlets distributed here to the American press is a speech by Mao Tse-tung less than two years old which (manifestly) has been neither withdrawn nor forgotten. "While massacring the people in other countries," — goes this particu-

lar thought of Chairman Mao — "U.S. imperialism is slaughtering the white and black people of its own country. Nixon's fascist atrocities have kindled the raging flames of the revolutionary mass movement in the United States. The Chinese people firmly support the revolutionary struggle of the American people. I am convinced that the American people who are fighting valiantly will ultimately win victory and that the fascist rule in the United States will inevitably be defeated."

At the banquet Mr. Nixon toasted Chairman Mao, Chou En-lai, the whole lot of them. I would not have been surprised if he had lurched into a toast of Alger Hiss.

Premier Chou was more cautious. He did not even say that Nixon is a nice running dog. The stress, always, was: people to people, it being communism's insistence that the American people are okay, but their leaders are awful, with something of a lacuna in their theory on how it is that okay people elect fascist, warmongering leaders.

Came the toast: "I propose a toast" — to President and Mrs. Nixon? No... "to the health of President and Mrs. Nixon." The difference between toasting someone and toasting someone's health, is, well, noticeable.

THE IMPLICATIONS of such symbols may not be immediately apparent. But, watching the face of Chou, one could not help but reflect that the smile must have been similar on the face of his hero, Stalin, when the boys got together to toast peace and dignity, and self-determination of all peoples, at Yalta.