

Nixon Liked His Press

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One consequence of the China journey may be a noticeable reduction in tensions between two forces who have been separated from each other for 15 years and more by mutual hostility and suspicion — President Nixon and the press.

The scene at Hangchow villa in which Mr. Nixon apologized to his attendant chroniclers for the secrecy

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about the content of the talks was as historic in its way as his meeting with

Mao Tse-tung.

For a while, anyway, the President will not have the press to kick around anymore. They have shared with him the peak of his presidency. They brought his every word and gesture to the world — minute by minute in living color. Without them the trip would have been merely sensational. They made it a spectacular without parallel in diplomacy.

And they were, for the most part, too busy discovering and marveling at feasts, toasts, Panda bears and acupuncture to deliver

any acupuncture to him. He never got such a press.

That "drumfire of criticism" of which he so bitterly complained in the course

of another Far Eastern enterprise, the invasion of Laos a year ago, was stilled.

The "gaggle of commentators" scored by Vice Presi-

dent Spiro Agnew in his famous onslaught on the Fourth Estate on Nov. 14, 1970, were all with him. The "closed fraternity of privi-

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leged men, elected by no one" indulged in little "instant analysis and querulous criticism" as they wandered wide-eyed through the

closed society.

The presidential speechwriter, Patrick Buchanan, the conservative strong man of the White House staff and author of the Agnew diatribe, was glimpsed behind his leader at the gymnastic exhibit. Even he could have found no fault with the millions of words being beamed to the homeland by the 87 reporters in the entourage.

H. R. Haldeman, the President's right arm, who on the eve of the trip accused the press of "having a vested interest in the unsuccess of the President's policies," was also along, and he might have thought that for once the press had suspended what he called their prejudice towards the "non-working-out of a venture."

Only one dissenter rose up in the chorus. It was William F. Buckley Jr., the most important member of the press corps from the White House point of view. While the rest of the world was watching the President at his most presidential, touching glasses with Chinese leaders in the first banquet, Buckley — whose brother, Senator James L. Buckley of New York, said he had been taken along to keep him out of New Hampshire — looked on with loathing.

"I would not have been surprised if he had lurched into a toast of Alger Hiss," he wrote in his column last week.

Buckley poses a painful problem for the President, who is anxious to mollify the conservatives. The vice president can hardly attack Buckley, the Voltaire of the Tories. Agnew may even find himself choking out some kind words for CBS, Eric and Walter and Dan and Bernard having reacted in so much more acceptable a fashion.