

Gifts of Friendship

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By Dorothy McCardle

President and Mrs. Nixon welcomed 77 members of the Chinese acrobatic troupe at a White House tea yesterday, extending the kind of greeting usually reserved for ambassadors or even heads of state.

Mrs. Nixon thanked the Shenyang Troupe for "the great gifts you have brought to Washington—your talent and your friendship.

"Friendship is the most important gift from one group to another," the President told his guests.

Pointing out that they are the first performing artists to come to the United States the People Republic of China in a quarter of a century, Mr. Nixon said that "Everyone will say that the first is the best.

He addressed the group in the State Dining Room, speaking into a microphone on a small platform just beneath the portrait of Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. Nixon voiced regret over the "great wall of hostility between the Chinese and the Americans over the

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past 20 years. As a result of my meetings in Peking," he continued, "that wall of hostility is now coming down."

He expressed the hope that in the future "young Americans may have the opportunity to go to your great country and that they will be as fine ambassadors of friendship as you have been to us."

Troupe leader Chang Yung-wu, responding in Chinese, thanked Mr. Nixon for his "warm speech" and souvenirs (pins bearing the presidential seal) and told of the "deep impression" American hospitality had made on the acrobats.

While they moved into the Blue Room for tea, the Nixons lingered behind with newsmen where the subject shifted from diplomacy to football.

On the Redskins' Super Bowl chances against the Miami Dolphins Sunday in Los Angeles, Mr. Nixon was laughingly noncommittal. "I think they'll be even," he said.

He will be watching the

game in Florida, but "still pulling for the home team," while working on his Inaugural Address and State of the Union message.

In the Blue Room, the visitors accepted tea but bypassed the cookies as "too sweet." And they peered curiously from the windows for a final glimpse of their host.

Outside, Mr. Nixon boarded his helicopter on the first lap of his trip to Florida. He waved and the acrobats waved back.

Editor's Note: The White House yesterday permitted "open coverage" of the Nixons' reception for the acrobats. Instead of limiting coverage to a selected "pool" of a few reporters, all accredited reporters and photographers—more than 100—were allowed to attend. Thus, the event was not a test of the new "pool" policies under which Washington Post reporter Dorothy McCardle was excluded from five previous social events involving President and Mrs. Nixon.