

The Toastmaker

RICHARD NIXON is being royally treated by the Chinese almost as if he were still President, and a number of commentators in this country highly resent it. They express their fear that the Chinese do not comprehend Nixon's peculiar and unprecedented position as a President forced to resign under the cloud of being an unindicted co-conspirator in Watergate.

In our opinion, this fear is much exaggerated. The Chinese are not at all dumb about who retains and who has lost face, and they doubtless are reading the messages of the Peking banquet toasts with great clarity.

THE TOASTMAKER could not resist taking a swipe at the Helsinki accords of last summer. Some people, Nixon said, believe that "the mere act of signing a statement of principles or a diplomatic conference will bring instant and lasting peace"—a veiled allusion, it was assumed, to President Ford and Secretary Kissinger for "naively" (a favorite Nixon word) trusting the Soviet Union with the accord.

If anyone is showing himself a trifle naive, it is the American visitor. The Helsinki European security accord could only have been reached and signed by 35 nations under the shield of the U.S.-Soviet detente policy, Detente was the creation of Nixon and his national security advisor in June 1972, before the Watergate roof fell in. It is a policy that will always do credit to the fallen statesman, and it is unworthy of him to belittle his own legacy in order to win an approving smile from his Chinese hosts.