

POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS, AND GNOMIC JOKES, AND EVERYTHING HE SINGS IS AMPLIFIED BY HIS SECRETARIES AND THE PREMIER. IT IS NOT EASY FOR A WESTERNER TO HOLD HIS OWN IN SUCH A DIALOGUE.

AFTER THE AUDIENCE WITH MAO, EVERYONE AT THE FIRST EVENING'S BANQUET IS EUPHORIC. THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. NIXON MANAGE TO EXCHANGE A FEW WORDS BEFORE PREMIER CHOU RISES TO MAKE THE FIRST OF THE EVENING'S TOASTS, A TRIBUTE TO PATRIOTIC FRATERNITY. THE PRESIDENT REPLIES, TOASTING THE CHINESE PEOPLE AND THE HOPE OF PEACE. THE TOASTS CONTINUE, WITH LESS FORMALITY, AS THE NIGHT GOES ON.

ACT II

SNOW HAS FALLEN DURING THE NIGHT. IN THE MORNING, MRS. NIXON IS USHERED ONSTAGE BY HER PARTY OF GUIDES AND JOURNALISTS. SHE EXPLAINS A LITTLE OF WHAT IT FEELS LIKE FOR A

WOMAN LIKE HER TO BE FIRST LADY, AND ACCEPTS A GLASS ELEPHANT FROM THE WORKERS AT THE PEKING GLASS FACTORY. SHE VISITS THE EVERGREEN PEOPLE'S COMMUNE AND THE SUMMER PALACE, WHERE SHE PAUSES IN THE GATE OF LONGEVITY AND GOODWILL TO SING, "THIS IS PROPHETIC!" THEN, ON TO THE MING TOMBS BEFORE SUNSET.

IN THE EVENING, THE NIXONS ATTEND A PERFORMANCE OF THE RED DETACHMENT OF WOMEN, A REVOLUTIONARY BALLET DEVISED BY MAO'S WIFE, CHIANG CH'ING. THE BALLET ENTWINES IDEOLOGICAL RECTITUDE WITH HOLLYWOOD-STYLE EMOTION. THE NIXONS RESPOND TO THE LATTER; THEY ARE DRAWN TO THE DOWNTRODDEN PEASANT GIRL—IN FACT, THEY ARE DRAWN INTO THE ACTION ON THE SIDE OF SIMPLE VIRTUE. THIS WAS NOT PRECISELY WHAT CHIANG CH'ING HAD IN MIND. SHE SINGS "I AM THE WIFE OF MAO TSE-TUNG," ENDING WITH FULL CHORAL BACKING.