

DESPITE THE denials, it is clear that President Nixon and Vice President Agnew are on opposite sides of the ping-pong table as far as Communist China is concerned.

This has raised questions about their personal relationship. Some friction is natural between two headstrong, ambitious leaders like Nixon and Agnew. Yet intimates say President Nixon, himself once a controversial Vice President, identifies with Agnew.

As Vice President, Nixon found himself out in the cold. He was allotted a backstairs office that no one else wanted in the Senate. His staff was smaller than he had rated as a junior senator. He had to scrounge for transportation.

White House wisecracks called him "Junior" behind his back. And in 1956 Harold Stassen announced his "Dump Nixon" campaign inside the White House. Intimates recall that Nixon was stung.

He is determined to treat his own Vice President with more dignity. In matters of protocol if not policy, Agnew is treated as the No. 2 man in the Nixon administration. He has an adequate staff, ample office space, a plane for his personal use and the deference of presidential aides.

No outward friction is at all apparent between the two top men in the Nixon administration. Yet intimates confide that the President has complained privately about Agnew's bullheadedness and has questioned his judgment a time or two.

Perhaps more to the point, the President has refused to say whether he wants Agnew as his running mate again in 1972.

ON THE China question, Agnew argued inside the policymaking National Security Council against easing relations with the Chinese mainland. Secretary of State William Rogers pushed for holding out the olive branch.

Insiders say the President approved Rogers' initiatives somewhat reluctantly. Not until Peking opened the bamboo curtain for ping-pong did Nixon show any enthusiasm for a detente.

Then at the urging of foreign policy adviser Henry Kissinger, say the insiders

the President took full charge of the relaxation policy. He also took credit for the promising results.

These sources suggest that the President, though he encourages dissent in the policymaking councils, was a little annoyed at Agnew's continued opposition. The President reportedly feels Agnew sometimes can be too rigid.

Such irritation perhaps was inevitable. Lyndon Johnson, after selecting Hubert Humphrey as his running mate in 1964, told him bluntly: "No President and Vice President have been able to get along."

The Vice President's only constitutional function, except for the routine chore of presiding over the Senate, is to be ready in case the President should die. The knowledge that the Vice President is standing by, waiting in the wings, seems to grate against most Presidents.

As it happened, Humphrey managed to get along with LBJ but confided to us that the experience was like "living on a volcano."

LBJ himself became so despondent in the vice presidency that he talked of abandoning politics and returning to his alma mater, Southwest Texas State Teachers College, to become its president.

In his warning to Humphrey, LBJ said that Harry Truman and Alben Barkley had been close friends in the Senate, but couldn't get along as President and Vice President. Within 90 days after Barkley was sworn in, he was no longer invited to cabinet meetings, Johnson told Humphrey. And Franklin D. Roosevelt, of course, changed Vice Presidents in 1940 and again in 1944.



Post 5-2-71
Jack Anderson

Nixon-Agnew: New Tensions