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When the Chinese Dragon Smiles

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING in Maoland this week would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. Even now — as millions of television viewers can attest — it is more than passing strange to see the President of the United States wielding chopsticks, hoisting toasts and talking away with the leaders of a vast and alien populace that has been taught for more than two decades to hate us and all we stand for.

When the Chinese bands play "The Star Spangled Banner," or "Home on the Range," or "America the Beautiful," the basic unreality is emphasized rather than resolved. It is as though we were viewing a continued installment of the old TV show, "Star Trek," in which American outer space explorers are received with smiling but suspicious propriety by hosts whose real intentions are unknown.

All this is by way of emphasizing President Nixon's repeated warning that it is a mistake to expect too much of his unprecedented visit to Red China. From his viewpoint, a previously shut door

has been opened and an important step taken in the direction of his hopes for "a full generation of world peace." This could well be true, and hopefully it is, but what should worry us is the true viewpoint of Peking.

IN THE HEAVY PRESS EMPHASIS being given to Mr. Nixon's historic trip, with its predictable public excitement and optimism, it has been all but forgotten the trip was at the invitation of the Chinese Communists. They did it indirectly through their long-time American journalistic friend, the late Edgar Snow, who reported in *Life* magazine that Mao would welcome a visit by Richard Nixon "either as a tourist or as President."

Mr. Nixon took it from there, so vigorously that the idea has virtually seemed to become his own. In point of fact, however, what is now going on can be viewed as a carefully-considered major move by Peking to help accomplish its continuing aim of emergence as an active world power. Even if nothing else happens, our President has been instrumental in projecting Red China as a new third force whose potential is now of immediate and much deeper concern to East Asia and Soviet Russia alike.

WE DO NOT WISH to suggest that Mr. Nixon is being used as a patsy in the power play. He unquestionably is fully aware of such considerations — but to him the causes of better understanding, cooperation and world peace are paramount, as indeed they are. He is risking much for ideals that can never be attained unless such risks are taken.

President Nixon certainly can and should be applauded for the effort. At the same time his warning against undue optimism must be kept firmly in mind, and for a very long time to come. The Chinese Communists may be able to play "The Star Spangled Banner" with vigor, but they surely do not subscribe to its sentiments.