

THE WASHINGTON POST Saturday, Feb. 26, 1972

A 7

Nixon in '60 Planned Trip To China, Magnuson Says

By Don Oberdorfer

Washington Post Staff Writer

Twelve years ago, in another presidential election year, Richard M. Nixon had a plan to go to China to improve his image with the American public, a senior Democratic senator said yesterday.

Sen. Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, said the 1960 Nixon trip was nipped in the bud after he and the late Sen. Clair Engle (D-Calif.) heard about it.

The two lawmakers, who wanted to visit China to study the possibility of trade in non-strategic materials, let the State Department know they would make a fuss if the then-Vice President was permitted to make a Peking journey and they were not.

The 1960 Nixon plan to visit China, never publicly announced, was the subject of a report in *The Washington Post* by columnist George Dixon on March 28, 1960.

Dixon, who is now dead reported that "Secretary of State Christian A. Herter is unofficially lending his good offices to clear it (a Nixon Peking journey) at the other end with Red China's political boss, Mao Tse-tung."

He added, "the Vice President thinks that a trip to Red China within the next

few months would boost his political stock back to where it was after his historical quarrel with Nikita S. Khrushchev in a Red Russian kitchen.

"Mr. Nixon subscribes to the theory that if it worked once it can work twice and that if he can achieve a 'break-through' into the forbidden country that holds one fourth of the earth's people his 'image' will be so gigantic he'll overshadow any stay-at-home Democratic opponent," Dixon wrote.

The Dixon account said "Both Magnuson and Engle swear that if the Vice President is allowed to make such a trip for purely political reasons and they are barred from a fact-finding study from which they can derive no possible political advantage they will 'tear the roof off.'"

Magnuson said yesterday he recalls the incident vividly. A 1960 Peking journey "would have been a ten-strike" for Mr. Nixon that year, he said.

A long-time advocate of trade with China, Magnuson said Mr. Nixon's current journey appears to be a step in the right direction. He added that due to the absence of substantive information on the actual business of the trip, however, it may turn out "a little like a Chinese meal: it looks good, it tastes good, and in a little while you're hungry again."