

Ever since David and Julie Eisenhower returned from their visit to the People's Republic of China last month there has been speculation that former President Nixon would be making another trip there. Today that speculation became official fact. Both the official Chinese news agency, Hsin Hua, and Nixon himself issued statements announcing that Nixon's trip will begin February 21st, marking the fourth anniversary of Nixon's first visit to the People's Republic.

The Chinese news agency statement said the Nixons had accepted the Chinese invitation with pleasure and that both they - the Chinese - and Nixon felt that a return visit at this time would be, quote, "appropriate." Nixon stressed he was making the trip as a private citizen and said he would bear all the costs of the visit. The Chinese are expected to send a plane to California to take the Nixons to China.

Observers in Peking have said that there is no apparent political significance behind the Chinese invitation except that Chairman Mao still has high regard for Nixon. Nixon, however, has long let it be known that he would like to be appointed as the next ambassador to the People's Republic and many see this return of Nixon to the public attention as a step to securing this position for himself, in the event of President Ford's retaining the presidency.

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