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Nixon Administration's Asian Priorities

To the Editor:

It has become increasingly clear that President Nixon's tactics vis-à-vis Peking have turned our Asian relations virtually upside down. It would be like Alice in Wonderland were it not so dangerous for the United States' position in Asia. For it is evident that the governing consideration in U.S. Government actions and attitudes in the Indian-Pakistani crisis has been Peking's ties with Pakistan together with Mr. Nixon's fear of rankling Peking, at least until his visit there has been consummated. His Peking trip has also been a major factor, of course, in the deterioration of our relations with Japan.

That the American Government (of all people, Richard Nixon's Government) should have decided it was of much greater importance to make a trip to Peking than to maintain good relations with India and Japan is a strange kettle of fish indeed. Even this would not be so hard to take were it not for some obvious and overwhelming facts:

- (1) Mr. Nixon's Peking trip was not at all essential to achievement of his objectives vis-à-vis Communist China, which could just as well have been attained by less dramatic means.
- (2) Japan and India are of far greater importance to the United States, and to the future aspirations of non-Communist Asia, than is Communist China.
- (3) We have paid, and are continuing to pay, an enormous price in Japan and India to insure the success of Mr. Nixon's trip to Peking and the gains

are hardly commensurate with the costs. (4) India had little choice but to act as she did, but not so with Pakistan, and (5) the priority Mr. Nixon has been giving his Peking trip has been determined largely by the expectation that it will bring him electoral advantages next year.

All of this is thrown into even more ironic perspective by the contrast between the widespread praise of the President's trip to Peking as a wise and courageous move and the fact that the trip idea was only an unnecessary appendage to a policy change which, although basically sound, was most belated and easy for Mr. Nixon to make. For he had waited as long as he could to make the change and he really had no viable alternative.

Moreover, as the former arch-foe of Peking and as the smearer, along with Senator Joseph McCarthy, of men like John Stewart Service and John Patton Davies, who years ago championed recognition of the Chinese Communists, and in view of the evaporation of the "China lobby," Mr. Nixon had no significant obstacles in the way of his decision. Despite all this, the American people have been bestowing great credit on the President for a move which actually involved very little wisdom or courage. How long will we be so gullible?

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 Madison, N. J., Dec. 15, 1971

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