

Nixon vs. Ford



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THE CHINESE care nothing for Gerald Ford. No friend of detente is a friend of theirs.

But should not Richard Nixon, their honored guest, have him somewhat in mind? Is he not beholden? Gerald Ford, after all, pardoned him, unconditionally and untimely, at enormous and an enduring cost to himself.

Could he not have postponed what has been called a sentimental journey out of consideration for primary politics?

What was required on both sides was the obliteration of the immediate past. For Nixon it was easy. It was easy, easier for him than for most Americans, especially Republicans.

"We just want to forget him," said a New Hampshire Republican, struggling to coax voters out of their warm homes to vote for the pardoner.

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BUT RICHARD NIXON will not have it that way. He will extract homage at any price. He is determined to have his party see him as he sees himself — as a master politician and a foreign policy wizard who was deserted by politicians in an hour of petty political crisis.

The Chinese have chosen to honor him as a Western sage. Some think that the Chinese, as cynical as Richard Nixon, see in him the perfect instrument to torture his successor, to bully him out of detente and to force him into

withdrawing U.S. recognition from Taiwan.

It was not, of course, enough for him to go there, to be enfolded in official honors and special privileges not granted to Gerald Ford. He had, as always, to go a step further. He stood before the microphones in the Great Hall of the People and hinted heavily that since he left the White House it had been amateur night for world peace. The Helsinki Pact, Gerald Ford's one accomplishment, had been a mistake.

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ANY OTHER MAN might have delayed the many-squalored thing until Gerald Ford, under strong challenge from Ronald Reagan, could have had a clear run in the New England primary. But it was a question of disappointing the Chinese and disappointing Gerald Ford. Richard Nixon unerringly opted for the Chinese. They can do more for him. Sure, Gerald Ford had spared him indictment, trial, possible prison, and even admission of anything graver than "error of judgment."

But what has he done for him lately?

Richard Nixon's motives are, to use one of the more misleading catch phrases of his presidency, "perfectly clear." He views the Forbidden City as the route back to recognition.

What are Gerald Ford's chances in the early primaries compared to his in history?