

@CHAPTER = CHINA

The Bush administration's policy toward China has been one of maintaining relations at any cost and sacrificing human rights in the process. The near-silence of the Reagan administration on human rights violations in China juxtaposed with its stridency toward the Soviet Union showed a clear double standard. The Bush administration, however, has raised hypocrisy to new heights by coupling public expressions of concern with behind-the-scenes efforts to patch things up with those responsible for the slaughter and arrests following the June 4 crackdown. The symbolism of a top-level U.S. delegation meeting in secret on the Fourth of July with the Chinese leadership who crushed the democracy movement, and again on International Human Rights Day, December 10, will stand as the hallmark of the Bush administration's human rights policy in 1989.

The Bush administration's willingness to ignore human rights and let the Chinese government set the terms of U.S.-China relations became evident in February when President Bush visited Beijing. He turned what could have been an important opportunity to raise human rights issues into a clear message that human rights in China was off the U.S. agenda. On February 26, he hosted a barbecue to which the U.S. ambassador, Winston Lord, had invited Professor Fang Lizhi, China's most outspoken dissident and human rights activist. Embassy officials told the press that the invitation was meant to signal concern about human rights. But that concern was not shared by the White House, which made it known before the event that the President would probably not meet with Fang. In any case, there was no opportunity: uniformed Chinese police physically prevented Fang from attending the dinner.

In final meetings with Chinese leaders before his departure, the President expressed only "regret" over the incident. The White House then went out of its way to say that the invitation to Fang had not been the President's idea and blamed the U.S. embassy for the fiasco. The message could not have been clearer: President Bush was more concerned with soothing the sensibilities of Chinese authorities than with defending human rights.

Quite apart from his studied avoidance of China's most famous advocate of basic freedoms, the President also ignored "talking points" on human rights prepared for him by his staff for use at the dinner. Throughout January and February, intellectuals in China, inspired by Fang, had sent petitions to Deng Xiaoping and the National People's Congress urging amnesty for such political prisoners as Wei Jingsheng, who has been imprisoned since 1979 for writing an article urging that China's modernization program include democracy. Their hopes that the U.S. President would give a boost to their efforts were dashed.

In March, martial law was declared in Tibet following a demonstration on March 5-7 in which Chinese troops followed Politburo member Qiao Shi's exhortation to be "merciless." Dozens were killed, and more than 300 were arrested. The State Department made a public statement deploring the violence and excessive use of force against demonstrators, but it did not mention China by name and did not express its views directly to the Chinese leadership -- undoubtedly to avoid offense.

From mid-April on, as student demonstrations in Beijing and elsewhere gathered strength, avoiding offense appeared to become the Bush administration's guiding principle. The President and Secretary of State studiously avoided comment on the growing democracy movement, and at no time did they publicly suggest that there would be serious repercussions if the authorities responded violently.

Lower-level officials were marginally more forthcoming. At a May 4 hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Ambassador

Richard Williams, stated the U.S. hope that Chinese authorities would act with restraint. In response to a question from the subcommittee chairman, Ambassador Williams conceded that it would be a positive gesture if the Chinese authorities would talk with the students, but declined to answer a question as to how the United States would respond if there was a crackdown on the demonstrators. When Representative Jim Leach, the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, asked whether the United States stood for absolute freedom of press and expression in China, Williams responded, "We are for absolute freedom of expression and press, and so forth, but I do not believe that we advocate any country taking steps if such steps would result in social chaos, and thus be incapable of reaching the goals which we want."

The administration refrained from public comment when martial law was declared on May 20. Administration sources have said that President Bush sent private messages to Deng Xiaoping, urging him not to use force against the students, but it is unclear with what strength those messages were conveyed.

After the tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square, the administration wasted precious hours "watching and waiting" before condemning the random massacre of civilians. Secretary Baker, appearing on Cable News Network just after massive violations had been extensively reported, said: "It would appear that there may be some violence being used here on both sides." He declined to discuss whether the Bush administration would consider sanctions against the Chinese, stating: "Before we get into hypothetical situations, let's see how this most recent and extremely deplorable development unfolds<-%-20> <%0>.<-%-20> <%0>.<-%-20> <%0>.<-%-20> <%0>.<-%-20> <%0>.<-%-20> <%0>Let's see what happens over the course of the next few days before we start hypothesizing about what we might or might not do in the future." Baker's refusal to "start hypothesizing" was a refusal to meet clear human rights violations with a firm U.S. response.

On June 6, after considerable prodding by Congress, the administration reluctantly imposed limited sanctions on China, including a suspension of sales of military items, suspension of visits between U.S. and Chinese military leaders, and a "sympathetic review" of requests of Chinese students for asylum. But it was clear even as he announced the sanctions that President Bush was unenthusiastic about applying economic pressure on China. At a news conference, the President stated: "I don't want to hurt the Chinese people. I happen to believe that commercial contacts have led, in essence, to this quest for more freedom."<\$F The President's fears about "hurting people" was rather disingenuous. No such concern was expressed when the United States imposed sanctions against Nicaragua, Cuba or Vietnam.>

The President went on to state that "I think that it's important to keep saying to those elements in the Chinese military, 'Restraint. Continue to show the restraint that many of you have shown.'" In view of the ferocity of the army's action against the demonstrators and the later round-up of democracy-movement participants, it hardly seemed appropriate for the President to be speaking of the military's "restraint." The President further reduced the significance of the sanctions -- and, indeed, trivialized the events at Tiananmen Square -- by stating that "now is the time to look beyond the moment to important and enduring aspects of this vital relationship for the United States."

Not content with the Bush administration's tepid response, Congress responded almost immediately to the crackdown. Within days, dozens of sanctions bills had been introduced by both Republicans and Democrats. On June 20, the House Banking Subcommittee on International Development Institutions and Finance held a hearing to discuss the U.S. position on loans to China in the multilateral development banks. The administration refused to send a witness to the hearing,

thus depriving itself of an important platform to condemn Chinese abuses and to state a strong policy against loans to China by the World Bank.<\$F By law (Section 701 of the International Financial Institutions Act), U.S. representatives to the multilateral development banks are required to vote against loans to governments engaged in a pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.> Faced with the near certainty of Congressional action to force the U.S. to oppose loans to China, the administration announced later that day that it would seek to postpone new multilateral-development-bank loans to China, and suspended "participation in all high-level exchanges of Government officials" with China.

The sanctions announced by President Bush on June 6 and the later decision to oppose loans to China was as far as the administration was willing to go, despite calls in Congress for more extensive measures, such as suspension of China's Most Favored Nation trading status and an end to high-technology exports. Although the President promised to review other aspects of the U.S.-China relationship, additional sanctions were not imposed, despite the persistently serious human rights situation in China. Moreover, at no time did the administration state clearly what the United States expected from the Chinese government if sanctions were to be lifted -- a crucial step for making sanctions meaningful. Worse, the administration began undercutting the few sanctions it did impose almost immediately.

On July 9, the administration announced its decision to sell three Boeing jetliners to China, valued at \$150 million. (A fourth aircraft was delivered in August.) The delivery had been halted, along with all other military sales, in June. The items are considered "dual-use" because their navigational equipment can be used for military purposes. The change in policy was justified by White House Chief of Staff John Sununu, who stated: "There was some indication a few days ago by the leaders in China that they were going to try to extend the hand [of conciliation] back to the students<%-20> <%0>.<%-20> <%0>.<%-20> <%0>.<%-20> <%0>.<%-25> <%0>That was a constructive step." No such "constructive step" took place.

In October, the ban on military sales was further weakened when the 42 Chinese military officers assigned to work on Project Peace Pearl, a \$500 million program to upgrade Chinese fighter aircraft, were permitted to resume their work. The officials had been taken off the project at the time of the President's announced sanctions. On December 20, President Bush waived a Congressional ban on the export of three communications satellites to China.<\$FThe ban had been imposed by Senator Albert Gore through an amendment to other legislation.> Secretary Baker justified the sale -- which should have been prohibited under the President's own sanctions package -- as being in the U.S. "national interest."

According to *The Washington Post* (December 12, 1989), the only arms deal with China which now remains on hold is an \$8.2 million contract for the shipment of submarine torpedoes and torpedo launchers. Again, as in the case of the sale of the Boeing aircraft, there is no sign that China modified its repressive policies in any way that would justify a diminution of sanctions.

The administration also undermined other aspects of the sanctions package. Immediately following the events of June 3-4, the Export-Import Bank (a U.S. corporation which provides loans to U.S. businesses seeking to invest overseas) quietly stopped processing Chinese loan applications. The State Department held up the applications for two weeks, then began processing loan applications as if nothing had happened.

By October, administration officials were quietly testing Congressional waters about the feasibility of resuming support for loans to China by the

multilateral development banks. House and Senate leaders, however, made clear their opposition to such a move.

Despite the alleged ban on meetings between Chinese and U.S. officials, Secretary Baker openly met with the Chinese Foreign Minister in July during an international conference on Cambodia. In September, representatives from the office of the U.S. Trade Representative ("USTR") held meetings with Chinese officials to discuss China's entrance into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade ("GATT") -- a move ardently sought by the Chinese government. Although USTR officials told Human Rights Watch that they had conveyed their opposition to China's admittance to GATT in conversations with the visiting officials, they also admitted that as a result of the widely publicized meeting, Chinese entrance was brought a step closer. In October -- to the delight of the Chinese leadership -- the new U.S. ambassador to China, James Lilley, attended a major aeronautics show in Beijing in which a large number of military aircraft were displayed; representatives of the Western European countries were conspicuously absent.

The Bush administration attempted to export its own tepid response on China to its Asian allies. On July 6, Secretary Baker met with foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and urged them not to adopt additional sanctions against China. An administration official who briefed reporters stated: "We are not considering new sanctions [and] we will be articulating our measured response -- that is what we will be arguing for." When meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, Baker apparently warned Japan not to "isolate" China. This effort to lobby other countries against forceful measures to protest the killings and arrests sent yet another signal to the Chinese that the U.S. was not concerned about human rights.

The speed with which the Bush administration dismantled its own sanctions policy caught Congress off guard. Despite a flurry of Congressional activity on China sanctions, legislation was not completely enacted before Congress adjourned in November for the year. Sanctions against China (including a ban on arms sales, U.S. satellite exports and police equipment, an end to nuclear cooperation, a ban on further liberalization of export controls, and a suspension of investment insurance by the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation) were actually passed by the House and Senate, and a conference report was drafted and adopted by the House -- over strong administration protests. Thanks to extensive lobbying -- led by National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft -- the bill was weakened to allow a presidential waiver of the sanctions on "national interest" grounds. Unfortunately, due to a legislative technicality, the Senate failed to approve the conference report, and the bill languished. At the end of 1989, it was unclear whether Congress would again take up the issue of China sanctions when it returns to Washington on January 23.

Symbolically, the Bush administration's most important action toward China in 1989 was its decision to send a high-level delegation, including National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, to China on December 9. Anticipating the outrage that greeted the news, the administration made its decision in absolute secrecy. Congress was not consulted and, it appears, even the State Department's Asia Bureau was unaware of the plan. The enduring symbol of the Bush administration's human rights policy toward China will be the televised image of General Scowcroft, drink in hand, toasting the Chinese leadership with these words: "We extend our hand in friendship and hope you will do the same." He then went on to say, in a callous slap at the Chinese now in prison for their advocacy of peaceful change: "In both our societies there are voices of those who seek to redirect

or frustrate our cooperation. We both must take bold measures to overcome these negative forces." These actions were clearly meant to placate Beijing and to apologize for the rupture in ties imposed by Washington after Tiananmen Square, despite the lack of Chinese action in curbing human rights abuses.

Faced with a barrage of criticism, President Bush did further damage. He justified his decision by stating that he was looking for ways to find "common ground" with Beijing, and noted that "[w]e have contacts with countries that have egregious records on human rights." Secretary Baker attempted to justify the mission by stating that human rights were on the agenda, and noted that China's leaders "[are] going to have to help us" if good relations between China and the U.S. were to be restored. Such a statement rang hollow, however, in light of the administration's unilateral move to repair relations on Chinese terms. President Bush then made plain that the West should not expect any quick reciprocity from the Chinese for the extraordinary U.S. gesture, stating that "time is required" before Beijing's full response can be evaluated.

There would be yet one more revelation in 1989 which eclipsed even the December mission. On December 18, the White House revealed that Scowcroft and Eagleburger had made a secret trip to China in July, just weeks after the crushing of the democracy movement. The trip had been kept secret and was only revealed when it was reported by Cable News Network. (The Secretary of State had apparently deliberately misled the Congress about the July visit when he said that the December trip was the first high-level U.S. visit to China.)

The administration stated that the purpose of the July mission was "to show the sense of purpose and direction of the U.S. Government." But it clearly violated the President's June 20 statement suspending all high-level exchanges with China.

While the Scowcroft-Eagleburger missions overshadowed other administration efforts to ignore human rights issues, there are several other aspects of the administration's policy which deserve condemnation. For example, the State Department attempted to persuade the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial foundation not to give its annual human rights award to Professor Fang Lizhi. According to Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, the chair of the memorial board, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Solomon asked that the award not be presented to Fang, stating that negotiations with the Chinese on Fang's release were at a "very delicate stage." Townsend said that the State Department was "not very helpful," because the award called attention to Fang's presence in the U.S. embassy -- a source of extreme irritation to the Chinese authorities which the Bush administration hoped to minimize.

The administration also opposed an important Congressional initiative which would have granted safe haven to Chinese students with J-1 visas in the United States. On November 30, the President announced that he would veto legislation to permit Chinese students to stay in the United States and, instead, would grant the students a four-year extension in the United States by administrative order.<§F The President did not technically veto the bill. Since Congress had adjourned, presidential inaction on the bill would normally have constituted a "pocket veto." Instead, President Bush sent a memorandum of disapproval to the Congress indicating that he was returning the bill to the legislative branch.> Because the President's order is actually more generous to Chinese students in the United States than the Congressional measure, it can only be assumed that the President vetoed the legislation to avoid offending the Chinese government by disassociating himself from the hugely popular Congressional measure. Congressional supporters of the bill -- which passed unanimously in both Houses of Congress -- objected to the administrative alternative because they feared that the President could change his mind if the Chinese government objected.

Representative Nancy Pelosi and Senator Edward Kennedy, the chief sponsors of the legislation, have said that they intend to pass the legislation again, and many observers feel that Congress will have the necessary votes to override a presidential veto. (It should be noted that neither the Presidential action nor the Pelosi bill addressed the problems of Chinese nationals holding visas other than J-1, who will not have an automatic right to reside in the United States after June 5, 1990, when the President's June 6, 1989 directive offering one-year's safe haven to all Chinese nationals in the United States expires.)

The Bush administration also exhibited a lack of generosity toward Chinese nationals who fled their country after the June 4 crackdown. A group of more than 100 student leaders, dissident writers, intellectuals and independent trade unionists escaped to Hong Kong following the crackdown. France, alone among the Western democracies, speedily accommodated the asylum requests of about 70 of them. The rest remained in limbo, fearing detention and possible repatriation if they revealed their whereabouts to Hong Kong authorities. Instead of making it known that the Chinese would be welcome, the administration threw up bureaucratic obstacles and admitted only a handful.

Perhaps the one salutary response made by the administration after the Tiananmen Square bloodbath was the decision to offer sanctuary to Fang Lizhi and his wife, Li Shuxian, at the U.S. embassy in Beijing on June 6. Unfortunately, similar concern was not demonstrated about the fate of dozens of other activists. Ren Wanding, a human rights activist imprisoned during the Democracy Wall movement and prominent among the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, went to the U.S. embassy after the June 3-4 crackdown. Instead of being treated like a person in imminent danger and in need of assistance, he was read bureaucratic regulations and eventually turned away. He was soon arrested and remains in detention.