

UNCERTAIN OF FUTURE, CHINESE STUDENTS FIND HELPFUL FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

The communiqué of 16 July by leaders of the Group of Seven wealthiest democracies reflects their deepest concerns. Accordingly, about one-third of the 21-page statement issued after their 15th annual summit conference in Paris was dedicated to an appeal for "decisive action" to "understand and protect the Earth's ecological balance," a new realm of worries for the world's most powerful elected officials. The rest of their agenda dealt with more familiar themes, such as the pinch in their interrelated economies and the peril of those insuperable third world debts. Then, somewhere near the end of their communiqué, the seven leaders squeezed in a paragraph critical of the People's Republic of China for its gruesome repression of students, scholars, intellectuals and workers who took part in the recent protests for democratic reforms within its borders. The statement by the seven denounced China's violation of human rights and urged their own respective governments to impose political and economic sanctions.

The PRC's reaction was correspondingly swift—and expected. The morning after the communiqué, *People's Daily*, the Communist Party's main newspaper, ran a front-page editorial fulminating against the Group of Seven's "gross interference in China's internal affairs." The paper then dismissed reports of violent events in the capital's Tiananmen Square on 3–4 June as "groundless charges" and "sheer fabrication."

Orwellian actions

Despite such statements, the news from China continued to include reports of arrests and executions. China's Orwellian approach to events was also used in criticizing President Bush and his Secretary of State, James A. Baker III, after they imposed limited trade sanctions on military exports as part of a "measured response" that would not seriously unsettle any long-range strategic im-

portance of the US relationship with China or curtail their careful diplomatic communication.

Several US businessmen complained that trade sanctions will exact a far more serious toll than the White House thought probable. When the State Department announced the sanctions, it suggested the cost to US suppliers might run as high as \$200 million, but some business executives argue the real figure may be as much as \$1 billion. Despite the trade rules imposed on China, two 757-200 transports, which Boeing had scheduled for delivery to Chinese airlines just as Bush's ban went into effect, were released in July by the State Department. The two planes, valued at about \$50 million each, are among the 11 Boeings, worth \$650 million in all, that the company is exporting to China with financing from Japan's Fuji Bank. The Pentagon has held up the release of the aircraft, however, because of a single component. Each plane contains Honeywell inertial reference systems that use ring laser gyros, which are subject to restrictions under the Arms Export Control Act.

For their part, members of Congress from both political parties have expressed anger over the White House decision on the Boeings and called for tougher sanctions. On 14 July, the Senate approved by a vote of 81 to 10 an amendment to the State Department's budget bill for fiscal 1990 that would suspend trade and development programs with China. This goes well beyond the sanctions that Bush imposed. The conditions are similar to those the House appended to a foreign aid bill in late June. The measure, sponsored by Senate Democratic Leader George J. Mitchell of Maine and Republican Leader Robert J. Dole of Kansas, would give the President wide latitude to suspend sanctions once Bush reports to Congress that the PRC has made "progress" on democratic reforms.

The action came three days after the Senate approved another amend-

ment submitted by Mitchell, Dole and 20 others to liberalize the Administration's promise to extend until 5 June 1990 any J-1 visas held by Chinese students that expire in the next 12 months. About 80% of the estimated 37 000 Chinese students and scholars in the US today hold J-1 visas. In the first six weeks after Bush's offer of deferred departure was made on 5 June, fewer than 30 of them had applied for a visa extension, largely because accepting the offer might put them in peril of punishment upon their return home.

An unsettling requirement

The J-1 requires them to return to China for two years after their visas expire or their studies end. The requirement is unsettling because many Chinese students now in the US joined campus solidarity demonstrations in sympathy with the democratic movement in the PRC (PHYSICS TODAY, July, page 45). Some also helped spread news back to China about the protests in the US by way of computer networks and facsimile machines. With the detentions and executions of some demonstrators and the harassment and crackdown on intellectuals in China, students in the US fear being charged as counterrevolutionaries if they are forced to return in the current political turmoil. In the event, applying for visa extension, says Yuangeng Huang, a graduate student in computer science at the University of Maryland, "puts a mark on the student."

The Mitchell-Dole measure, backed by a vote of 97 to 0, is an amendment to an immigration reform bill that is wending its way through Congress. It would allow Chinese nationals in the US before 5 June to remain in the US with "lawful status as a nonimmigrant" for two additional years beyond the Bush extension—to 5 June 1992, if they apply for a change in their legal residency status and if the US Attorney General, with certification by the President, has not found in

What Chinese students want to know about visas

Students and scholars from the People's Republic of China, along with their academic department heads and mentors, sometimes have been perplexed about US visa policies since President Bush's program of "deferred departure" was announced on 6 June. To help clarify the matter, PHYSICS TODAY has assembled in question-and-answer format some of the information that PRC nationals are most likely to want to know. The answers are based on advice given by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service in mid-July.

Q. What does a Chinese national need to do if his or her academic or research program ends before 5 June 1990, the date to which President Bush has extended any visas that may have expired in the interim?

A. If the nonimmigrant status of a Chinese academic comes to an end before that date, the person may choose to extend his or her departure from the US until then. INS has not announced the procedure it intends to use, but the individual seeking a visa extension should go to the INS district office and apply for deferred departure. It will be granted immediately.

Q. If the academic program or research project does not end until after 5 June 1990, what must be done?

A. The student or scholar is not required to do anything right now. However, according to INS, a PRC national who is maintaining nonimmigrant status may request that his or her nonimmigrant status be terminated and that he or she be granted a deferral of enforced departure under the President's new directive. INS also states that a Chinese academic who chooses this option and who later wishes to continue as a nonimmigrant student or scholar will not be reinstated under that status. If the student or scholar is eligible to apply for an extension of stay or a transfer to a new academic program before 5 June 1990, the individual should follow the customary application procedures.

Q. What is the meaning of "deferred departure" in general terms? What are its advantages and disadvantages?

A. In the current situation, the INS defines deferred departure as a means for Chinese citizens who cannot extend their nonimmigrant status and who have indicated an unwillingness to return home when their visas lapse to remain in the US until 5 June 1990. Once a Chinese national is granted deferred departure status, he or she automatically loses nonimmigrant status and is granted official authorization to work, so that the individual can earn a living in the US. Nobody granted deferred departure status will be denied work authorization. However, the exact process for getting such authorization has not yet been announced. At this time it appears that if a Chinese academic requests deferred departure from an INS district office the individual will not be reinstated to nonimmigrant status at a later date. That means, in effect, that if a student or scholar on either a J-1 or an F-1 visa who has completed the academic program as well as practical training, after being given deferred departure, decides to continue with another academic program that runs beyond 5 June 1990, that individual may be prohibited from doing so without first leaving and reentering the US.

Q. How do the provisions of deferred departure apply to F-2 and J-2 dependents?

A. The INS states that deferred departure applies to PRC nationals who were in the US as of 6 June 1989. Although not specifically stated, it is assumed that the benefit of work authorization under deferred departure will also apply to F-2s and J-2s. Once a Chinese national is granted deferred departure status, confirmation is still needed from INS for the dependents. INS clearly states, though, that no PRC nationals (except those convicted of criminal activities and residents of a third country) will be required to go back to China before 5 June 1990.

Q. What is the definition of political asylum? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this option in the current circumstances?

A. According to section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Naturalization Code, anyone currently in the US may request asylum "who is unable or unwilling to return [to that person's country of nationality or country of habitual residence] because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." Individuals granted asylum by the State Department may apply to INS for immigrant status after two years in the US. Five years later they may apply for US citizenship. While in asylum in the US, they are free to move about, to pursue studies and to work.

the meantime that it is safe for them to go back to China. During that period, what's more, the PRC nonimmigrant may be authorized a legal work permit to take a job.

What led up to this action was the barrage of letters and petitions to members of Congress from Chinese students across the country, from Rutgers to Stanford. One of the first to respond was Representative Tom Lantos, a California Democrat and chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. On 5 June, a day after the terror in Tiananmen Square (see column by David Gross on page 9), Lantos urged the Attorney General, Richard Thornburgh, to issue visa waivers for Chinese students who might be visiting colleagues and relatives at home or who need extensions to continue their studies in the US. "Clearly, there is a real and present danger for many of these students," wrote Lantos.

Since then, to be sure, many in Congress have met with Chinese students and with members of the ethnic Chinese community in the US and heard their fears about possible repercussions from the Beijing regime if Bush's one-year deferred departure plan is widely used. On 11 July, a day after he and Dole met with a group of Chinese students in the Capitol, Mitchell told colleagues on the Senate floor that accepting Bush's extra year "requires them to indicate an unwillingness to return to China. According to these students, such a statement brands them as traitors in the eyes of their government and provides a means for Chinese officials to track down and pressure students who do not choose to return to China at this time. . . . In view of the Chinese government's widespread persecution of prodemocracy students, these students in the US would be in imminent danger if they were forced to return to China" when their visas expired.

A freshman senator, Herbert H. Kohl, a Democrat of Wisconsin, called the amendment "a humanitarian gesture. And I hope that it sends a strong message to the government in Beijing: We will not tolerate the slaughter of students in the streets. . . . They will thrive and they will prevail."

Talk in the Senate about visas for the Chinese came at the same time as its debate on a major overhaul of US immigration laws. On 13 July, the Senate approved 81 to 17 a bill to set an annual ceiling of 630 000 immigrants to be admitted to the country, with 480 000 of the slots going to close relatives of US citizens and to permanent residents. The other 150 000

would be reserved for immigrants without family connections who qualify because of their skills and education, such as outstanding artists, scholars and scientists. Under the Senate rubric, Chinese students could be favored. Ironically, a century ago, US immigration rules were written to specifically keep out Chinese and other Asians. The House of Representatives is preparing its own bill. The two versions are not all that far apart.

Also in the House, Democratic Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, whose constituents in San Francisco include the largest community of ethnic Chinese in the US, introduced the Emergency Chinese Visa Adjustment Act of 1989, which, like the Mitchell-Dole amendment, waives the requirement that students on J-1 exchange visas must return to their home country for two years before applying to return to the US. Pelosi's bill was immediately endorsed by Chinese student associations on 118 campuses and co-sponsored by 158 House members. A bill similar to Pelosi's was introduced in the Senate by Alan Dixon and Paul Simon, both Illinois Democrats, and co-sponsored by three other Democrats, Brock Adams of Washington, Christopher J. Dodd of Connecticut and Bill Bradley of New Jersey.

A rescue operation

Meanwhile, the National Science Foundation invited PRC graduate students, postdocs and other scholars to apply for supplemental funds to cover any financial hardship that arises from the President's one-year extension. In a letter on 15 June to university officials, the foundation's director, Erich Bloch, suggested they send a brief letter, signed by the principal investigator and an institutional official, setting out the circumstances that would require supplemental funds.

NSF's rough estimates for the num-

ber of students who might be affected come to 230 postdocs, virtually all of them in physics, astronomy, materials science, chemistry and mathematics, along with 600 grad students, about three-fourths of them in those same fields. Bloch has agreed to "find" as much as \$2 million from "odd bits of programs in the foundation" to cover the rescue operation.

After one month, NSF officials admit "we are somewhat surprised by the response." Only about 50 requests for supplemental funding have arrived by mail. As casualties of the turmoil, Chinese students at home and abroad are learning some painful lessons. In the wake of the crackdown in China, all assumptions about scholarship and society in the PRC "probably have to be seriously rethought," says Michel C. Oksenberg of the University of Michigan's Center for Chinese Studies. In the past decade, China was gradually emerging from its long nightmare of wars, repression and deprivation, he observes. A new generation of young men and women was emerging, with few scars from the terrible history of the country. They believed a more open and modern China was possible. Now, science may be set back a whole generation, says Oksenberg, if students and researchers are reluctant to return.

From the PRC perspective, some Chinese students in the US have acted provocatively. One group at Princeton University issued a proclamation on 13 June that stated in part that the signers no longer recognized the government of Prime Minister Li Peng. Chinese students, for their part, claim they have received vague threats from anonymous callers and have been under intense surveillance by PRC embassy and consular officials. The harassment has taken several forms—from a man watching for hours from a car parked in front of a house near Boston where Chinese

graduate students operate a communications center, to telephone calls that warn students that their career or life is in danger, to visits to university campuses in search of the identity of students and scholars involved in prodemocracy activities. After listening to complaints about incidents of harassment from Chinese students from the San Francisco area, Congressman Lantos wrote to Secretary of State Baker asking for an investigation of the Chinese embassy in Washington and its five consulates around the country.

Several members of Congress have spoken with officials at the embassy, including Ambassador Han Xu about the alleged incidents. Han, who has served in Washington for more than four years, was recalled to Beijing in early July as part of a general meeting of PRC ambassadors. In his case, Han was dismissed.

'A lenient approach'

The PRC embassy rejects the allegations by Chinese students. In mid-July it released a memorandum stating: "It is our consistent position to oppose any kind of monitoring, harassing or intimidating of overseas Chinese students, directly or indirectly." At the conclusion of the memo, the PRC embassy said: "The Chinese government has announced that it will take a lenient approach towards those students who, without knowing the truth, participated in demonstrations or rallies in the United States and that it will not look into their cases at all."

When questioned about the memo's contents, Chinese students on university campuses and at government labs tend to laugh cynically. A Chinese astrophysics researcher at the University of California in San Diego cracked, "If you believe that, you'll believe the world is flat."

—IRWIN GOODWIN

OUT OF THE WRECKAGE, A 100-METER RADIOTELESCOPE IS BACKED BY CONGRESS

Even as workmen were clearing away the heap of rubble from the 300-foot radiotelescope near Green Bank, West Virginia, which collapsed last November when a steel plate fractured between a leg and the collecting dish, Congress was putting up funds to build a powerful new 100-meter replacement. On 23 June, the House of Representatives, by a vote of 318 to 6, passed a \$3.5 billion fiscal 1989 "dire emergency" supplemental ap-

propriations bill containing \$75 million for the new telescope. Once President Bush signed the bill into law on 30 June, the National Science Foundation was assured of getting half the appropriation this year and the remaining half after the new fiscal year begins on 1 October, so that the agency can replace the wrecked telescope with a new one without drawing on its own prevailing budget.

How this was achieved is a case

study in the ways of Washington. On 21 April, NSF's Advisory Committee for Astronomical Sciences, led by Arthur B. C. Walker Jr of Stanford University, agreed that although a replacement for the Green Bank radiotelescope was not the highest priority for astronomy, it ought to be funded. In doing this, the committee said, the new telescope should not impinge on the already pinched budget of the agency's astronomy pro-