

China MFN status is blood on Bush's hands

by Lydia Cherry

A smiling Li Peng, the man who ordered the tanks into Tiananmen Square to massacre thousands of Chinese students and workers one year ago, addressed the Chinese nation May 25 lauding President Bush's renewal of China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status as a "wise decision" which "we welcome and appreciate." Bush's decision was no surprise: It was expected that he would not let the blood left on his hands by the appeasement of Beijing over the past year interfere with his intent to recommend renewal. This reward to tyranny follows a year of Western concessions to Beijing, which has rejected any compromise.

In a statement issued from his cell June 5, 1989, U.S. political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche noted about the earth-shaking China Revolution, which culminated in the bloody Sunday witnessed by the world: "Today from that scene, the blood of ten thousand martyrs flows eternally, a surging, impassable river dividing the peoples within all nations of our planet into two camps. The world was separated between those appeasers of Moscow who, like Henry A. Kissinger, propose we condone the massacre without emotion, and those who receive the blood of ten thousand martyrs as a sacred trust."

George Bush has left no doubt about which camp he is in. As Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) pointed out at House hearings May 24, Bush intentionally missed every chance to send a principled message to Beijing. "He missed an opportunity by vetoing the bill to protect Chinese students in the U.S.; he missed another opportunity by intervening personally on the veto override; he missed another opportunity by authorizing the Scowcroft visits and the resumption of U.S. support for World Bank lending. . . . The President has insisted on a resumption of lending for basic human needs and has broadened this definition—turning it into a loophole through which forestry, vocational training, and agricultural project loans can pass."

Despite administration attempts to convey a contrary impression, there was strong consensus among the Chinese students and intellectuals who have fled to freedom, that extending MFN status would only help to prop up the regime. Pelosi noted that in her meetings in Paris the week before with Chai Ling, the woman in command of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations until shortly before the troops moved in urged that the U.S. finally take a stand by refusing to extend the trade concessions.

Bush's incredibly stupid statement in his May 24 speech

that, according to U.S. Ambassador to China James Lilley—just returned from Beijing—"all the students there, the intellectuals there, all of them, favor the continuation of Most Favored Nation status," was a laughingstock at in House hearings that day. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Solomon fell on his face, in trying to answer California Rep. Tom Lantos's question on how Lilley conducted his survey to come up with those statistics. "Is our Ambassador likely to be in touch with the tens of thousands who are in prison because of their pro-democracy views; were they part of that survey?" Lantos hammered. "No, I'm not aware that Ambassador Lilley has visited any prisons," Solomon replied.

Congress is not likely to act

The House hearings saw numerous congressmen vent on Solomon their constituents outrage against the moral bankruptcy of Bush's China policy. Yet despite the astuteness in pointing out the administration's lies, none of these congressional critics has shown willingness to play outside the rules of the game. Even Pelosi, who has very strong support from Chinese students in the U.S., signaled she could "compromise" on MFN status. "The Chinese rubbed our noses in the student's blood and they did it on international television, and we have to have an appropriate response to that. If it is not MFN, because we decide it is not in our *economic* interests to do so, then you have to suggest something else," Pelosi said to Solomon.

Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.)—who unfortunately chairs the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs—made clear that the great advocate of human rights wasn't going to invest anything in this one. "I think the President made the correct decision in temporarily renewing MFN for China," Solarz said in a press statement released the day Bush made his decision. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (D-N.Y.) was more positive as he announced that he and Sen. Alan Dixon (D-Ill.) were introducing a joint resolution to rescind MFN status. "Sought-after trade concessions should not be given to the butchers of Beijing," he said, adding that he believes Republicans in the Senate who have supported Bush on China would now vote to overturn his decision on MFN status. D'Amato admitted that he had helped to sustain Bush's January veto of the bill introduced by Pelosi to protect Chinese students in the U.S.

Any optimism that Congress will be the vehicle to stop this last Bush travesty is probably misplaced. If both houses of Congress passed "resolutions of disapproval" rejecting the Bush policy, the President could veto their rejection. Overruling that veto would require two-thirds votes in the two chambers. It should be recalled that on the Pelosi bill—a bill in which Congress had absolutely nothing to lose and which had the American people solidly behind it—though the House voted to override Bush's veto, Senate leaders caved in.