

## Next round of assault: Clinton's China policy

by Edward Spannaus

Two years ago, there was a major push to revive tensions between the United States and China, around allegations of espionage, alleged campaign financing and human rights violations, the reversion of Hong Kong, and spurious projections that China would soon become a major military threat to the United States. But with the success of the Jiang Zemin visit in late October 1997, and Clinton's aggressive defense of his policy of engagement with China, the attackers were thrown on the defensive.

Throughout 1998, despite periodic flareups around allegations of technology transfer involving satellite missile launches, the China issue remained more or less on the back burner, while the "Get Clinton" gang pushed the Monica Lewinsky story and pressed for the impeachment of the President. Now, with the impeachment drive having come to a halt, the New Cold Warriors are again revving up the "China threat" and hurling allegations of espionage and treason against the President.

The centerpiece of this revived assault is the still-classified "Cox Report," issued by the bipartisan House Select Committee on China, headed by Rep. Christopher Cox (R-Calif.). Cox has charged that U.S. national security was damaged by supposed espionage and weapons-technology theft by China.

A second major provocation is coming around a Pentagon report on security questions in the Taiwan Straits—a report mandated by Congress last year. The China-bashing crowd has already begun shrieking about putting Taiwan under a theater missile-defense system—which China predictably views as a threat to its claim that Taiwan is part of China. This would also violate the Clinton administration's own "One China" policy.

The objective of all this is to roll back the Clinton adminis-

tration's most important foreign-policy initiative: the strategic partnership with China.

A White House source told *EIR* that "both the content and the timing of the reports are clearly designed to create a new wave of hysterical outbursts about China's threat to the region, just as Zhu Rongji arrives in Washington"—referring to the April 8 visit of the Chinese Prime Minister.

When the administration official was asked if he thought that that would actually occur, he replied, "Unfortunately, we are certain that that will be the result. Their clear intent is to cause a sharp reversal in our constructive engagement policy, and to sour what is still a very fragile relationship."

### The background

Within days of the reelection of President Clinton in November 1996, Lyndon LaRouche warned that the British had been taking advantage of the distraction of the election campaign in the United States, to conduct a coordinated series of destabilizations ringing China, and he emphasized the importance of developing a strategic partnership between the United States and China. (Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "Ring Around China: Britain Seeks War," *EIR*, Nov. 22, 1996.)

Already in the weeks preceding the elections, the news media had begun running stories on what was then dubbed "Indonesia-gate"—around the role of John Huang, the Riady family, and the Lippo Group in U.S. election campaign financing. At the end of December 1996, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* launched the "Chinagate," or "Donorgate," scandal, with front-page stories on Asian contributions and fundraising for the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign and the Democratic National Committee.

On Feb. 9, 1997, the *Washington Post* ran a front-page article, co-authored by intelligence-stringer Bob Woodward,

based on leaks of classified FBI information, claiming that the Chinese had allocated \$2 million to buy influence in Congress and in the administration, and had targeted a number of U.S. elected officials for contributions. Four days later, Woodward followed up with another front-page article, headlined: “Chinese Embassy Role in Fund-Raising Probed.”

The significance of this was identified by the London *Sunday Telegraph* on Feb. 16, 1997, in a front-page article by Washington correspondent Ambrose Evans-Pritchard—one of the key architects of the “Get Clinton” campaign from 1993 on. “China finally replaced the old Soviet Union as the number one enemy last week in the eyes of the U.S. political establishment,” Evans-Pritchard proclaimed. “If one could date the beginning of the new Cold War, it would be Thursday, February 13, 1997, the day that the *Washington Post* reported that U.S. counter-intelligence had caught the Chinese embassy plotting to subvert the U.S. political system.” Evans-Pritchard concluded: “Now President Clinton will have to reassure America that he is not on the Chinese payroll.”

By March 1997, the hard-core Clinton-haters were calling for President Clinton to be impeached around the alleged “Chinagate” fundraising abuses. This appeared, among other places, in an early March *Washington Times* commentary, and with the request of Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.) to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) to begin impeachment proceedings against the President. Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.) joined the cry for impeachment, citing “breaches of national security” and Chinese “economic espionage.”

Meanwhile, Ross Munro and Richard Bernstein published their book *The Coming Conflict with China*, excerpts of which were prominently featured in the March-April 1997 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

The anti-China campaign continued to build up, with both Rep. Dan Burton’s (R-Ind.) House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, and the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee chaired by Sen. Fred Thompson (R-Tenn.), opening investigations and holding hearings. The Senate hearings began with much fanfare, and with promises to prove Chinese influence-buying in the 1996 elections. The hearings never lived up to the grandiose promises, and at the end of October 1997, Senator Thompson shut them down.

At the same time, President Clinton hosted Chinese President Jiang Zemin for a mini-summit meeting in Washington. Clinton took the occasion to reiterate his policy of engaging China, warning that any attempt to isolate China would be “unworkable, counterproductive, and potentially dangerous.” (See *EIR*, Nov. 7, 1997.)

But, at precisely that moment, the “Get Clinton” gang was working behind the scenes to contrive a new scandal against the President, since Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr’s Whitewater and related investigations had fizzled out. This, of course, was the Monica Lewinsky affair—which dominated the news media throughout 1998, even though a hard core of Clinton-haters and New Cold Warriors continued to

insist that Clinton’s “sell-out” to China was the real issue over which the President should be brought down.

## Chinagate revived

Now, with the impeachment drive having suffered a stunning defeat, the “Get Clinton” gang and the “New Cold War” crowd are combining forces to continue the assault on the Presidency and to provoke a confrontation with China.

The hottest item on this circuit is the widely circulated book *The Year of the Rat: How Bill Clinton Compromised U.S. Security for Chinese Cash*. Written by Edward Timperlake, a former Senate staffer and Reagan-Bush administration official, and William C. Triplett, a former House staffer, the book charges that Chinese military intelligence penetrated the Oval Office and obtained U.S. military secrets in exchange for campaign contributions.

Other elements of this revved-up attack include:

- An effort spearheaded by Congressional Republicans to force the administration to renew the now-ended practice of the United States introducing resolutions condemning China at the annual meetings of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. Some Democrats, such as Reps. Richard Gephardt (Mo.) and Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), have joined in this effort. The Geneva conference starts on March 22 and continues through April—thus coinciding with the Zhu Rongji visit to Washington.

- The Dec. 10 “reconnaissance” fly-over mission of the contested Spratly Islands in the South China Sea by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.). Rohrabacher then produced aerial photos supposedly showing a Chinese military buildup on Mischief Reef. The Philippine press has reported that the British Royal Navy was involved in the Rohrabacher stunt, and that the British provided the reconnaissance photographs hyped by Rohrabacher.

- The Feb. 19 *Washington Times* featured a front-page attack on the U.S.-China military exchange program which has been promoted by the retiring commander of U.S. Pacific forces, Adm. Joseph Prueher. Unnamed Pentagon and Congressional sources were cited as claiming that the exchange program has enabled the Chinese to access “sensitive” military information. Prueher is also attacked by anonymous “China skeptics” in the Pentagon as being “too friendly toward the communist Chinese,” and for supporting the President’s engagement policy.

In sharp contrast to such, is the approach reflected in an interview with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in the current issue of *Time* magazine. In commenting on the way that Americans think of China, *Time*’s editor-in-chief Norman Pearlstine notes that the danger in the moralistic condemnation of China, “is that we hurt ourselves while missing the chance to help China solve its problems.” Pearlstine concludes, accurately, that “it is important that we come to view China more as an ally than enemy. The stronger China becomes economically, the better it will be for both our countries.”