

# Chinese spying scare under growing attack

by Marsha Freeman

For six months last year, daily newspapers carried front-page stories on how President Bill Clinton's policy of engagement with the People's Republic of China had allowed the transfer of dual-use satellite- and rocket-launch technologies from American companies, potentially threatening the security of the United States.

This media-created uproar led to the formation of a congressional committee, headed by Rep. Chris Cox (R-Calif.), which held numerous hearings to investigate those charges, and which expanded its inquiry into allegations of Chinese spying at the nation's nuclear weapons research laboratories.

Through an unending flow of illegal leaks to the press concerning the contents of the Cox Committee report, which is still classified, the latest scare campaign by the media, and by Republicans who aim to wreck the engagement policy with China, has centered around a scientist formerly employed at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, Wen Ho Lee.

Dr. Lee was fired by the Department of Energy in March in response to the media and congressional outcry, and forced into virtual hiding to escape from the press. He has not been charged with any crime, although he has been extensively investigated by the Department of Energy and the FBI. His lawyer, Mark Holscher, released a statement on his behalf on May 7, insisting that Dr. Lee is innocent of any crime.

## Trial by press

Dr. Lee's lawyer asserts in the May 7 statement that government investigators "have never found any evidence that Dr. Lee ever disclosed any classified information to anyone in Mainland China." The press has incorrectly reported that Dr. Lee and his wife took "several" trips to China, where he presented technical papers to Chinese scientists. Holscher explains that there were two trips taken, "which were approved in advance by Los Alamos Laboratory," and "were with the full knowledge and approval of the Federal Bureau of Investigation." The Lees' trip in 1986, in fact, was at the request of the FBI, in order for Mrs. Lee to obtain background information on Chinese scientists for the Bureau.

Holscher's statement recounts both Dr. and Mrs. Lee's work with the FBI, including one incident where the Bureau

paid Dr. Lee to fly to Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California in 1982, to meet and gather information on a Chinese-American scientist working there who was suspected of spying, and to report back to the FBI.

The latest round of accusations against Dr. Lee asserts that he transferred classified nuclear bomb codes into his personal computer at Los Alamos, with the implication that they could be given to China. "Press reports incorrectly state that Dr. Lee mishandled his . . . computer files," Holscher states. "Dr. Lee has never given computer files to any unauthorized persons. . . . Dr. Lee's computer files contained dozens of nonclassified codes. . . . It is irresponsible for the press to falsely portray any unclassified codes as containing classified information."

Holscher concludes: "Dr. Lee will not be a scapegoat for alleged security problems at our country's nuclear laboratories. Nor should he be used to further the political agendas of those who are illegally leaking confidential information concerning the details of the government's investigation."

## Teller: To stay secure, stay ahead

Nuclear weapons scientist Dr. Edward Teller, who has campaigned for four decades to end the security classification of scientific research, penned a commentary in the May 14 *New York Times*, to introduce some balance into the otherwise irrational coverage of alleged Chinese nuclear spying. Dr. Teller was responding to some of the outrageous comments, such as those of Dan Thomasson in the May 5 *Washington Times*, that "this case is far worse in its implications than the delivery of atomic bomb technology to the Russians more than 50 years ago."

Dr. Teller states that the theft of U.S. nuclear secrets for the Soviet Union by Klaus Fuchs and others in the late 1940s "constituted important information for the Soviets." He continues, "This situation is in sharp contrast to the present position of the Chinese scientists. They have had 50 years to consider the possibilities that we kept secret. It seems to be probable that the Chinese must have made discoveries that made the added knowledge from intelligence less important. I conclude, at this time, that Klaus Fuchs was more important than the Chinese spy at Los Alamos is apt to be today."

Dr. Teller also criticizes efforts by today's politicians to tighten security in response to the recent "revelations." He recalls that "the reaction of President Harry Truman to the leaking of information," was that "he imposed no additional measures for security." Instead, Truman called for "accelerated work on all aspects of nuclear weapons."

Dr. Teller insists that "the right prescription for safety is not reaction to dangers that are arising, but rather action leading to more knowledge, and, one hopes, toward positive interaction between nations," because "our continuing security is acquired by new knowledge rather than by conserving old knowledge."