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**Series:** Sununu, John, Files  
**Subseries:** Issues Files

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**OA/ID Number:** 29144  
**Folder ID Number:** 29144-002

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**Folder Title:**  
China - MFN [Most Favored Nation] (1990)

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MAY 29, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

THROUGH: DAVID DEMAREST *DD*  
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS

FROM: BOBBIE KILBERG *BK*  
DEP. ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC LIAISON

SICHAN SIV *Sichan Siv*  
DEP. ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC LIAISON

DEB AMEND *DA*  
SPEC. ASSIST. TO THE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS

JEFF VOGT *JV*  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF PUBLIC LIAISON

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR CHINA

Since your announcement to extend MFN to China, we have distributed a package of material (clippings, fact sheet, editorials) far and wide. Our target coalition group includes major association and business groups, the Chinese community, and Republican officials at every level.

Our short term goal was to make sure our cross section of opinion leaders knew the details of your decision so they could respond accordingly. We encouraged them to speak to the press, issue statements, cut radio and television feeds and write letters and editorials. For example, two press releases from the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce are attached.

Our plan for the long term -- helping the legislative process -- is more comprehensive. Our goal is to encourage general public support while targeting specific constituencies and areas of the country for special treatment.

We are also enlisting the help of several Members of Congress. For example, we've asked Congressman Jim Leach to write an OP/ED supporting MFN for China for the New York Times. We are talking to staff over the Congressional recess, and will confirm OP/ED placement for the major daily papers next week.

Likewise, a great majority of the business community is very pleased with your decision and has pledged its strong support. A coalition comprised of over 50 corporations and associations is strongly advocating your position on the Hill. Driven by the Chamber of Commerce, the NAM, the U.S. China Business Council and the National Foreign Trade Council, the coalition meets weekly to set lobbying strategy in support of MFN.

We are contacting each of the major associations in this coalition, as well as others not part of the coalition, to encourage individual press statements in support of your decision and to increase lobbying efforts. Moreover, we are providing association leaders with our MFN "fact sheets," which serve as talking points for TV and newspaper interviews. In addition to those already mentioned, some of these associations include: the U.S. Council for International Business, the National Corn Growers Association, the Computer and Business Equipment Manufacturers Association, Citizens for a Sound Economy, the American Business Conference, the Business Roundtable and the National Wholesale Grocers Association.

The Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars told us that they had expected the outcome but were surprised that your decision was unconditional. They are lobbying Congress to attach various conditions to the resolution of disapproval including:

- The PRC should remove the five year work requirement for students before they can apply for overseas studies,
- All political prisoners should be released, and
- Martial law should be lifted de facto.

Chinese-American leaders are generally in favor of MFN extension and have petitioned their elected representatives.

While the exact timing of the legislation is unknown, we will soon schedule a Roosevelt Room legislative strategy meeting with key members of our coalition groups to help bolster and coordinate their targeted grass roots activities.

✓ cc: Governor Sununu



||||| NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS |||

# NEWS

90-121

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACTS:**

LAURA BROWN (202) 637-3087

JUDGE MORRIS (202) 637-3145

## NAM SUPPORTS MOST FAVORED NATION STATUS FOR CHINA

WASHINGTON, DC, May 24, 1990 -- The National Association of Manufacturers today affirmed its support for President Bush's announcement on U.S. trade relations with the China.

NAM President Jerry Jasinowski said:

"The president's decision is the right one for China and the right one for the United States. U.S. trade with China has been on a non-discriminatory, or most-favored-nation basis, since 1980. It is the same kind of relationship that the United States has with approximately 170 other countries, and American companies have a lot invested in that relationship.

"The next move is up to Congress, and we very much hope wisdom will win over passion in Congress's deliberations.

"NAM shares the world's outrage over the 1989 tragedy in Tiananmen Square and is deeply concerned over the political repression that has followed. We are convinced, however, that cutting off U.S.-China trade is not the answer. Indeed, it would worsen the conditions we deplore.

"It would also be a serious blow to American competitiveness. U.S. firms have invested over \$310 million in China. Those investments are part of our efforts to build U.S. market presence in China and to increase the global competitiveness of American firms. They are investments that would be seriously put at risk if the

United States were to impose high, discriminatory tariffs on Chinese exports to this country.

"From wheat to airplanes, U.S. exports will fall if Congress takes normal trade privileges (MFN) away from China.

"It is true that the United States had a trade deficit with China last year. They sold us \$12 billion worth of goods and we sold them \$6 billion. If Congress takes MFN away, other countries will fill the import gap, but no one is going to offer the United States a new \$6 billion market.

"The United States and China will not be the only victims if U.S.-China trade is sacrificed to politics. Seventy percent of China's exports to the United States come through Hong Kong. The loss of that trade would be a hard blow to Hong Kong, which is already suffering a worrisome crisis of confidence.

"Sadly, if trade is interrupted and these costs are incurred, we will look in vain for the pay-off. With less U.S. contact, China will become more repressive, not less. The more market oriented industries in China will be dealt the harshest blow, and U.S. influence in that country will diminish.

"President Bush is keeping this country engaged in China by keeping the trade lanes open. This is the right course in today's global economy. We strongly support him. We hope the Congress will as well. The clearest American message is a united one," Jasinowski concluded.

-NAM-



**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**  
1615 H. St., NW  
Washington, DC 20062

Media Relations Department (202) 463-5682

# NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Thomas Love**

**COMMENT ON RENEWAL OF MOST FAVORED NATION STATUS FOR PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA  
BY RICHARD L. LESHER, PRESIDENT  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

WASHINGTON, May 25 -- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce strongly supports President Bush's decision to extend most favored nation status to the People's Republic of China for another year. We applaud his leadership on this issue.

The president's comment that our economic competition would not join us in denying MFN status should particularly be noted. The time is long past when the United States can afford to impose unilateral economic sanctions that not only fail to achieve nebulous foreign policy objectives but also severely damage U.S. commercial interests while benefiting our competitors.

###

90-145

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

DATE: 5-18-90

FROM THE PRESIDENT *CB*

TO:

Brent cc JAB

Re: MFN- China.

I think it is important that the various interest groups on the Hill know how their interests would be affected by curtailing MFN.

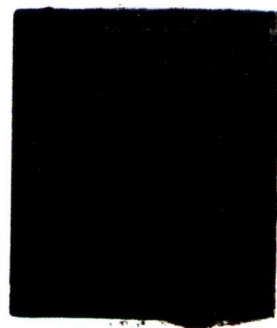
Grain  
Wood Products  
Boeing  
etc.etc.

Also there is a lot of latent support for Hong Kong in some conservative circles.

On the other hand, some textile folks-domestic- would probably sigh with relief if MFN is stopped.

Challenge: get the special interests alerted.

cc: John S



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3694

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

1989 PRESIDENT HAS SEEN  
5-28-89

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *BS*

SUBJECT: China -- Economic Effects of the Loss of MFN

The costs of loss of MFN for China would be felt by the United States and Hong Kong, as well as China. A summary of these effects follows:

- ✓ United States. China will retaliate for lost markets; it did so against U.S. grain in 1983 over a textile dispute. Likely targets would be lumber and paper (Weyerhaeuser) which are available from other suppliers. Other big losers would be:
- ✓ Wheat growers (Cargill, Continental Grain), who sold over \$1 billion in 1989; commercial aircraft manufacturers (Boeing, McDonnell-Douglas, Pratt and Whitney, G.E.), who sell a steady \$1 billion per year and dominate the Chinese market; phosphate fertilizer manufacturers (Monsanto, F.M.C.), who sell one-sixth
- ✓ of total output to China at more than \$1 billion per year; mining and construction equipment companies (Bechtel, Combustion Engineering, GE, Chrysler), who have hundreds of millions in
- ✓ 1990-91 sales at risk.

Importers, too, will be hurt. China produces one-third of U.S. toy consumption, 10 percent of footwear consumption, and fifteen percent of imported apparel.

Investors would find their \$4 billion in China at risk if retaliatory duties hit their imported materials and equipment.

Hong Kong. Already suffering from a crisis of confidence in Hong Kong's future, loss of MFN would cost at least layoffs of more than 20,000 workers in the Territory's shipping, banking, and insurance industries. The effect will be greater as earnings of export-oriented Hong Kong joint ventures in China are slashed, consumer spending in the colony drops and potential investors turn away. Hong Kong's GDP would likely fall 2.5 percent, leading to zero growth in 1990-91.

cc: Vice President  
Chief of Staff

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China. Chinese exports to the U.S. would face duties as much as ten times higher than current rates, exacting a heavy toll on China's foreign trade earnings, calling into question China's export strategy and its ability to service its \$44 billion foreign debt. China could increase subsidies to Chinese trading corporations to offset higher U.S. duties, but the government's budget deficit would rise as a result, perhaps by a third from \$8 billion in 1989. Without subsidies, China could lose \$6 billion in direct exports to the U.S.; with subsidies, at least \$3 billion will be lost. Rough estimates hold that about 1 million jobs, particularly in the new export-driven non-state enterprises in the Southeast, will be put at risk. China currently has a \$6 billion trade surplus with the U.S.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 26, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR GOV. SUNUNU

THROUGH: DAVID DEMAREST  
FROM: SICHAN SIV *JS*  
SUBJECT: CHINESE STUDENT LEADERS AND MFN

Following the President's extension of MFN status to China, Yongchuan Liu, President of the Washington-based Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars (IFCSS), told me that they had expected the outcome but were surprised that the President has granted MFN without any conditions.

His group has begun lobbying Congress for conditions to be attached to the resolution of disapproval. They include:

- The PRC should remove the five year work requirement for students before they can apply for overseas studies,
- All political prisoners should be released,
- Martial law should be lifted de facto.

Mr. Liu claimed that most students have agreed on conditional renewal of MFN, but admitted that the denial would hurt "some people."

We have already sent information packages to our supporters beyond the Beltway, primarily on the West Coast.

The Congressional Human Rights Foundation has requested that the President receive Chi Ling, a Tienanmen Square student leader, on June 4. She will be in town on June 3-8 and again on June 25-26. She has appeared on many TV programs including "Nightline" and was found to be polite and reasonable. However, she believes that economic sanctions are a forceful message that can be applied to the PRC. One risk of having her come on June 4 is that she may speak out strongly against MFN extension. The other alternative would be to bring in a mixture of non-supporters and supporters. Some of the latter on the West Coast have already written to Sen. Wilson expressing their support for the President. Copies are attached.

I am planning to meet with some student leaders next week. Please let me know if you would like to see them also.

Attachments

Shulian Zhu  
1517 Edith St.  
Berkeley, CA 94703  
May 22, 1990

Hon. Pete Wilson  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wilson:

Since the Agreement on Trade Relations Between the People's Republic of China and the United States has been signed in 1979, the volume of trade between the two countries has steadily and greatly developed. The mutually accorded MFN treatment is beneficial not only to the two countries but also to the economic prosperity of the Far-East Area. Signing this Agreement was one of the most sagacious decisions made by the governments of the two countries.

Any action of going backwards from this Agreement will severely damage the friendly Sino-U.S. relationship and the benefits of Chinese people, including Hong Kong people, as well as American people. From a long-term point of view, the relationship between the U.S. and the P.R.C. is very important for both the interests of the two nations and the world peace. We, the undersigned Chinese students and scholars currently studying in the U.S., hope the mutually beneficial trade relations between our two countries will be continued and extended.

Dear Senator, we are writing to request your help to urge the U.S. Senate and Congress make a wise decision on this matter.

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration and support.

cc: Hon. President Bush, Senators and Congressmen

Sincerely,

*Peng Shizhen* Shulian Zhu Yin Changou  
Zhou Jianming Xie Hong Li Jiahonke Zhang Jiu Tu  
Fei Peng Liu Lan Shen Liu Sual  
Yang Jinyang Rao Lijun Songpin Zha

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Sincerely,

Du Guotong    Hoo Jiaofan    Chen Zhen

Xu Zhijun    Pingji Xu    Fan Shengyan

Judy Mendel Lee -  
U.S.-China People's Friendship Assoc.

Michael Lee, U.S.C.P.F.A.

Yuan Qi    Chen Zhongxian

Wang Huamei

Lingming Jin

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Sincerely,

University of California, San Francisco

Zhang Wengang

Jiangjun Huang  
Xiaoliang Han, MD

Keli Cao M.D.

Wang Jie Yu  
Weidong Huang, M.D.

Baoquan Zhang, M.D.

Lisheng Hu, MD

Depei Liu

Xiaohong Ni

S. G. Yang

H. Su

WHL in

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Sincerely,

U. C. S. F.

*Zhu Shulian*

*Wannian Wu*

*Zheerong Jiang*

EVERGREEN COMPUTER INT'L INC

*Chen Li*

*Zhou Huiying*

*Wang Ming*

*Jin Lee*

*Pan Chen*

Berkeley, CA 94703  
May 22, 1990

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Thank you very much in advance for your consideration and support.

cc: Hon. President Bush, Senators and Congressmen

Sincerely,

*Yong Chen* (Futton Inc.)

*Don Mei* Chen Wei

John Xu

David Feng



# CHINA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (U.S.A.)

## CHINA'S HOPE DEPENDS ON AN OPEN ECONOMY

— An open letter to Congress  
from concerned Chinese students in America

The current debate over China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status has brought widespread attention to the issue of economic sanctions. We are very pleased that the American government and people, after a year of limited sanctions, are objectively discussing an issue which has great significance for the global economic strategy of the United States. Your decision will have a long-term impact on the extremely important and mutually beneficial Sino-American relationship.

As a group of Chinese students, representing the Chinese Business Association<sup>1</sup>, we earnestly request Congress to continue China's MFN status. This crucial decision should be made because it supports the principles of human rights and democracy, and also supports the best interests of the Chinese and American people.

According to statistics, cancelling the MFN status will inflict a loss of \$12 billion to China's direct and indirect trade income. The American economy will also lose \$5 billion in trade. The steadily growing private and governmental joint ventures between our two countries will be greatly reduced, and may even cease altogether. Furthermore, the technical, cultural, and economic exchanges between our peoples will decline, causing an overall deterioration in the Chinese-American relationship. It could easily cause irreversible damage to this relationship which gives so much hope to the Chinese people.

Because of a decade of increasingly liberal economic policies, the Chinese economy is very closely related to the international market. In light of this fact, the central government will easily transfer the burden of this economic belt-tightening caused by this cancellation to the important coastal economy and the millions of private entrepreneurs across the country. These independent economic players are already in a very vulnerable situation because of Beijing's stringent policies. Sanctions will cause China's balance of payment structure to become much worse off. The country's inflation rate would definitely rise and the gross national product would be reduced severely. We estimate that 30 million people would lose their present jobs. What is more dangerous, however, is that the country's whole economic reform process will be devastated. The whole open door policy will be fundamentally reversed.

After last June's Tiananmen Square event and because of the current political situation, we fully understand the widespread desire of many Americans to do something that would punish the Chinese government. Still, we need to point out the following:

- Under China's present social-economic structure, cancellation of the MFN will come with the cost of causing great suffering to innocent Chinese people. Surely this is not consistent with the desire of furthering human rights.



## CHINA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (U.S.A.)

- Since private entrepreneurs in the pivotal coastal economy will be the first to feel the heat, this action would crush the free market sector of China's economy, which has been painstakingly developed over the last decade.
- A democratic system of government cannot be forced upon a country solely through economic pressure. On the contrary, sanctions would actually stifle the flower of economic and political freedom. This struggling flower can only grow, blossom, and eventually become beautiful in the soil of an open economic environment.
- By further boycotting China, America runs the risks of giving up its most important economic interests in the Pacific Rim to a third country. It also risks creating unstable factors that could threaten the peace and development of the region and the world.

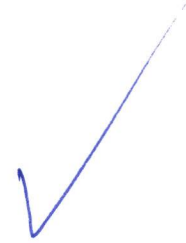
History proves that economic isolation hinders the development of democracy, social and political progress. This isolation is not what the Chinese people hope for and it is also not in the interest of Americans. If a government can be threatened by economic sanctions, we think that such a government can be threatened even more by an open economy. Now more than ever, China needs increased international input. With more commercial trade, technical exchanges, and cultural contacts between China and the rest of the world, the chances are better that ideological change and economic reform will occur, as more people develop a yearning for free markets and democratic government.

China's hope depends on an open economy. It is a prerequisite for reforms that will lead to democracy, freedom, and human rights. Please support the Chinese people's endeavor towards these goals, as you have done before.

The Board of Directors  
China Business Association, Inc.  
May 6, 1990. New York.

1. The China Business Association, Inc. (CBA) was established in 1987 as a non-governmental and non-profit organization. It is made up of students from mainland China who seek to promote understanding and exchange between the Chinese and American business communities. It has more than 500 members in 9 branches all over the United States. Please contact: Tel. (212)427-0366; Fax. (212)360-1837; Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1713, New York, NY 10025.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON



MAY 24, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR GOVERNOR SUNUNU

THROUGH: DAVID DEMAREST ~~XX~~

FROM: DEB AMEND ~~DA~~

RE: MFN FOR CHINA

Since the President's announcement this morning to extend most-favored nation trading status we have distributed the NSC fact sheet and a package of favorable editorials far and wide. Distribution includes:

- Republican hill offices.
- The appropriate offices within the White House, including Legislative, Cabinet Affairs, Intergovernmental, and Political. The Office of Public Liaison is distributing material to the business community and our supporters within the Chinese community.
- I've also distributed material to the various party committees for dissemination to their candidates and local parties.

The first scheduled OP/ED, by Doug Paal, NSC director for Asian affairs, will appear next week.

The National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce <sup>is</sup> reportedly hosting a trade forum on MFN tomorrow morning for major business leaders. Jeff Vogt's working with them on a list of things they can do for us.

Generally, we are encouraging public support via letters, OP/EDs, speeches, satellite interviews, statements, press releases, etc., from all our various constituent groups concerned with the issue. We'll target major papers and regional TV markets for specific placement as the issue develops over the next few days.

May 24, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR MARLIN FITZWATER

FROM: JOHN UNDELAND/NEWS SUMMARY

RE: CONGRESSIONAL REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S  
ANNOUNCEMENT ON MFN STATUS FOR CHINA

REPUBLICANS

SEN. GARN

"Tiananmen Square was so abhorrent to me. The Chinese government should be punished," Sen. Garn said. (Reuter, 5/24)

SEN. D'AMATO

"Sought-after trade concessions should not be given to the butchers of Beijing," Sen. D'Amato declared.... D'Amato and Sen. Dixon introduced a joint resolution to rescind MFN status until China showed it has improved its human rights record.... D'Amato said that he had supported Bush on [the Chinese students] matter and helped to sustain his veto in the Senate. But he said he could not support Bush now and predicted other Republicans would join him in overriding a possible Bush veto. (Reuter, 5/24)

REP. SOLOMON

Rep. Solomon, saying, "There are those of us here in this Congress who respectfully but strongly disagree with [the MFN] decision," announced to the House introduction of a bipartisan resolution disapproving the president's action. (UPI, 5/24)

DEMOCRATS

SEN. MITCHELL

Bush's decision "is inconsistent with American values, it is contrary to American interests, and it is profoundly wrong," Sen. Mitchell said. The Maine Democrat said he and others will introduce legislation to reverse Bush's action. (Reuter, 5/24)

Sen. Mitchell called the president's decision "profoundly wrong," and promised, "We're going to do everything we can to prevent it from taking effect." (UPI, 5/14)

**REP. FOLEY**

Rep. Foley said MFN extension faced "some very severe concerns" and "an uphill effort" in the House because of China's human rights practices.... Asked about overriding a presidential veto, Foley pointed to last year's House vote overwhelmingly rejecting Bush's veto of legislation to protect Chinese students in the U.S.

(Reuter, 5/24)

Rep. Foley indicated that there was widespread support for revoking China's trade status. "Across the board, from the most liberal members to the most conservative members of both parties there is a great deal of concern," Foley said.

(UPI, 5/24)

**REP. OBEY**

"At a time when we are trying to encourage the Chinese government to demonstrate recognition of the need to support individual rights, Bush sends them a message 'Don't worry, we really don't mean it,'" Rep. Obey said. "I think it's very bad business," Obey said.

(Reuter, 5/24)

**SEN. BENTSEN**

Some lawmakers expressed support or a willingness to be convinced of the administration's position. "Obviously, the president's policy in China has not worked.... Still, I'm ready to listen to the administration's explanation," Sen. Bentsen said.

(Reuter, 5/24)

Sen. Bentsen promised hearings on the decision and said Bush's "policy of accommodation toward China has not worked to this point."

(UPI, 5/24)

**SEN. GRAHAM**

Sen. Graham said: "I think it's a marginal call. In close calls, I leave it to the president."

(Reuter, 5/24)

**SEN. CRANSTON**

A Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee will conduct a hearing June 5 to probe human rights abuses in China, Sen. Cranston said. China's "human rights record is abominable and shows no signs of improving," he said.

(Reuter, 5/24)



AFP PHOTO

**Beijing University students march toward Tiananmen Square last May just before Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to China.**

but there have been few reports of purely political protest since last June.

It is possible, of course, that the Chinese people will eventually side with discontented elites and usher in China's first real democratic government. The sudden explosion of popular enthusiasm for change in Eastern Europe this year shows that long-term passivity may mask a deep desire for change. But solid evidence of any popular spirit for rebellion has yet to emerge, and the students and exiles have yet to embrace their own people in a truly democratic way. It seems overly optimistic to label last year's unrest and this year's posturing a "mass movement for democracy."

An excellent analysis of democratic movement in China in 1989 and subsequent activities by dissident group in the USA and France.

*Joseph Kahn, who has been a journalist in China, is currently a graduate student in East Asian studies at Harvard University.*

## THE WORLD

# Did the media idealize dissidence in China?

Not all scholars see the uprising rooted in a 'mass movement' for democracy

By Joseph Kahn

**T**he latest "democrat" to emerge from China, the well-spoken graduate student Chai Ling, arrived in Paris recently to a boisterous, uncritical reception. Like a half-dozen young dissidents before her, Chai, having hid in China for 10 months, converted a couple weeks of experience as a student leader in Tiananmen Square one year ago into the resume of an international heroine, a savior of China and an embodiment of the democratic conquest of 1989.

The media greeted the 24-year-old Chai, as they did her fellow dissidents, with a rush of hagiographical sketches. On "Nightline," Ted Koppel conducted an uncharacteristically velvet-gloved interview, interspersed with slow-motion video of the erection of the students' Goddess of Democracy statue, an image conveyed so often in the West it has become literally the central event in the student uprising. Chai, we are told, is a pluralist, a natural leader, so popular among the Chinese people that she found shelter from the head-hunting Chinese authorities for almost a year.

But Chai had another side largely ignored in the coverage. According to some supporters and detractors alike, she was perhaps the least stable and most controversial of the student leaders in Beijing. Emotional, single-minded and fiercely competitive, Chai waged a public power struggle to wrest control of the student leadership in the final days of the six-week uprising and then named herself "supreme commander of Tiananmen Square."

## Is it really a 'mass movement'?

Popular among a faction of students from outside Beijing itself, Chai championed the desire of a minority to remain in the square well after the protest had lost its steam, steeling them to face the ire of the government. She spurned the pleas of other student leaders to return to campuses and sealed Tiananmen Square from those she disliked.

The failure of the Western press to delve into these characteristics of Chai Ling is emblematic of a general glorification of the events of last April, May and June. Initially skeptical of the motives of a small group of university students who mourned the death of a former party official, reporters had, by the time of the military crackdown last June, become champions of the student cause. They described a democratic, pluralist struggle of American images, a colossal shift of popular opinion against a once all-powerful regime.

Today, the idealization continues. Even some seasoned Sinologists now make facile references to "China's mass movement for democracy." Many analysts include the Chinese protest as a central, leading event in the dramatic revolutions of Eastern Europe. This is the domino theory in reverse: No corner of the world can remain safe from Western democratic values.

In contrast, some scholars who have studied the student movement and some Chinese participants themselves believe the uprising had its roots primarily in the social and cultural discontent of elites, and only secondarily in political and economic unrest among the population at large. The movement showed only inchoate signs of "mass" involvement. And it was a "democ-



AP PHOTO

Chai Ling at a pro-democracy rally in Tiananmen Square last June: She may not be the pluralist that the media have painted her.

racy" movement more in rhetoric than in action.

"The media is vulnerable to the infectious hope that there is something in the air worldwide that will bring a new age when democracy is universal," says James C. Thomson, a professor of history and journalism at Boston University who has written extensively on press coverage of China. "Many people witnessed what happened in Eastern Europe and then read that back on China. Beijing must be like Leipzig and Prague. I don't buy it."

Without question, the students who marched in the streets of Beijing frequent-

ly chanted the Chinese word for "democracy," which translates more accurately and less distinctly to "people in the leading role." Students and intellectuals made excellent testimonials to the need to liberalize the government and wipe out corruption. Many of the student and intellectual dissidents who escaped China after the military crackdown, including the group that formed the Paris-based Federation for a Democratic China, have made "democracy" their stated *raison d'être*.

But despite the common use of the word, the participants in the movement in China and later in exile have failed, as did their dissident brethren in the past, to cross a major hurdle characteristic of democracy in the West, namely the settlement of the tense relationship between the "people" and the state.

#### Talk of 'democracy' nothing new

The dissidents themselves are the elite of the elite, a tiny coterie of gifted and privileged intellectuals in a nation of 1.1 billion people. These elites have not balked at their supreme status in Chinese society. Both during and after the uprising, they have sought to perpetuate a decided separation from those they refer to as the undifferentiated "masses."

Chinese elites throughout 20th-century history have spoken and written volumes about the need for democracy. Since Sun Yat-sen led his own exile movement some

80 years ago, virtually every major Chinese social and political movement has made a democratic state a central goal. The intellectual movement of 1919, the liberals of the 1920s, the Nationalists, the communists and the dissenters under each to a greater or lesser degree focused on the need for devolution of political power.

Mao Tse-tung pursued his goal of radical egalitarian democracy in the Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping promised democracy would flower with economic growth and stability. In 1979 and 1987, the Western media celebrated two major "democracy" movements led by students and intellectuals in Beijing and other cities.

Democracy cut across so many different political movements because few bothered to define it in any detail. Most used it as a euphemism, or a catch-all, for more concrete demands and objectives. The relationship between these movements and the "masses" was at best one of tutelage and at worst outright neglect.

"There are a lot of reasons to be pessimistic. One hundred years have passed, and they haven't moved off the dime," said Andrew Nathan, a professor of Chinese government at Columbia University. "I think fundamentally these people really want to move in the general direction of democracy, in a rudimentary sense. But the elitist strand is there and will continue to be an issue."

The students and exiles have continued this elitist tendency. Led by students from the best universities in the capital, a small fraction of the 1 percent of Chinese ever fortunate enough to receive a higher education anywhere, the movement never explicitly embraced workers, peasants or even older intellectuals. Aside from the expressed intention to "educate the masses" in due course, the students erected physical barriers to protect their domain in Tiananmen from mass intrusion and limited their major activities, speeches, hunger strike and dialogue to student representatives.

When a small but potentially promising "workers union" formed after the Li Peng government declared martial law last spring, the students - despite their knowledge of Solidarity in Poland - made Herculean efforts to keep their distance. The reason was partly tactical; many students hoped to avoid inciting the government. But many students said involvement by workers would sully the purity of the student ideals and possibly radicalize the movement.

#### A view from Czechoslovakia

"The students did not want to set off a social uprising. They wanted a symbolic event that would benefit the reform faction in the leadership," Nathan said.

The isolation of the Chinese students prompted a leading protester in Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution," where students also played a key role, to label the Chinese youth "totally naive."

Michael Hala, an organizer from Comenius University, said in a recent interview, "It was like they were having a protest against their parents, like little boys and girls... They had no contact with the rest of the population. They had no idea when to take center stage and when to fade away. In Czechoslovakia, we had no such problem. There was never any question that the students were an intricate part of the people as a whole."

Although Wu'erkaixi, a primary leader in Tiananmen Square and now a leading representative of the Chinese movement in exile, once insisted he spoke for all the Chinese people, he has now accepted a far more modest role. "The criticism is right, I think," he said. "In China, there were many thousands who came on the streets, maybe a million. But they were spectators, not participants. And they disappeared quickly."

"The students were not just the leading force. They were the only force."

The social discontent of the students and their desire for individual freedom did prompt a sustained clash with obtrusive authorities. But with a social and not political program at heart, the students put

forward a baffling array of demands that left most observers confused.

Those activists who escaped the crackdown last June and fled overseas this year have embraced democracy as an alternative to the repressive system that drove them out. But once again their actions seem more ambiguous than their words.

The Federation for a Democratic China, the leading dissident group, is headed by some intellectual exiles who only one year ago strongly advocated a theory of "new authoritarianism." Modeled after authoritarianism in South Korea and Taiwan, this system would vest in one patron leader, presumably the now fallen Zhao Ziyang, great political and economic

power to transform the nation.

For the federation's leadership, Yan Jiaqi and Chen Yizi (both top advisers to Zhao) and Wan Runnan (a well-connected millionaire businessman), democracy was a second choice adopted only because the winds in China blew hard-line last June. They are not Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel. When pressed on their goals for transforming China, the three declare their democratic intentions but adroitly skirt outright opposition to the Communist Party.

"They seem to be hoping the reformists will come back into power, and they will return to power themselves," said Nathan of Columbia University. "They do see elections and a market economy. But they are a moderate faction that wants to go slow."

Excluded from the dissident discussion almost entirely are the concrete desires of Chinese peasants and workers. Following the lead of students in Tiananmen Square, the federation includes no worker or peasant representatives.

Perhaps most important, the lack of strikes or sustained public protest in the year since the brutal crackdown do not suggest any visceral attachment to the values propagated by students and exiles. Workers and peasants in recent years have often shown willingness to risk the ire of the government striking for higher wages or against restrictive regulations,