

UPHEAVAL IN CHINA; BAKER SAYS WORRY ABOUT CHINA RISES

By BERNARD WEINRAUB and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES MAY 21, 1989

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Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d said today that the Bush Administration was increasingly concerned about China's political crisis.

"I don't think it would be in the best interests of the United States for us to see significant instability in the People's Republic of China, just like I don't think it's in the best interests of the United States for us to see significant instability in the Soviet," Mr. Baker said at a news conference here.

"At the same time, we support democracy, we support freedom of speech, we support freedom of assembly," Mr. Baker said in the first detailed response by a ranking Administration official to events in China.

Mr. Baker made his comments after meetings between President Bush and President Francois Mitterrand at the Bush family compound. They were joined by the French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas.

Mr. Baker told reporters that the events in China were discussed by the French and American Presidents. The Secretary of State, calling the events in China unclear, said: "I think we should be expressing our support for freedom of speech and assembly. I don't think we should be seen in any way as somehow inciting to riot." Regrettable Restriction

Mr. Baker called the restriction of news coverage in China regrettable and said:

"We wish it had not been done. We continue to urge restraint in the situation overall."

Asked to explain the turmoil in China, Mr. Baker, who met Chinese leaders several months ago in Beijing, said that "reform has to proceed apace."

"It's important that political opening up and economic opening up proceed apace to the extent that that is possible," he added. "And what may be happening here is that the economic reforms in China got out a little bit ahead of the political reforms."

He said: "Certain processes are irreversible. When people taste the fruits of freedom it's not our view that you can reverse that process."

Mr. Baker made his comments hours after the White House also urged restraint by the Chinese Government and the demonstrators. But the White House added it was evident that "the hunger for change remains strong" in China. Low-Key Response

Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman, said in a statement this morning that the United States remained "hopeful that a dialogue between the Government and the students is possible."

In the last few days the White House reaction to events in China has been deliberately low-key, with officials saying privately that the situation there seemed too fluid and uncertain to reach conclusions. Last night, the White House issued its first statement, urging caution by both sides.

President Bush has been briefed regularly on the situation, and officials said he had also watched television news coverage.

Mr. Bush, who is spending the weekend at his family compound here, was briefed this morning by Brent Scowcroft, his national security adviser, on the events in China.

In his statement, Mr. Fitzwater said: "The situation remains uncertain in China. Both sides have exercised restraint and we urge restraint to continue. The United States stands for freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, and President Bush commented yesterday on the inexorable march of democracy in China.

"The demonstrations of the last few days indicate that the hunger for change remains strong. We remain hopeful that a dialogue between the Government and the students is possible."

