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## UPHEAVAL IN CHINA: THE UTMOST CAUTION; President Counsels Restraint in China While Pushing Rebellion in Panama

By **ROBERT PEAR** and **SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES** MAY 22, 1989

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Eight days ago, President Bush urged the people of Panama to rise up and overthrow their ruler, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. Asked whether he wanted to temper or qualify his remarks, Mr. Bush said, "No, I would add no words of caution."

But today, Mr. Bush and his Administration displayed caution in responding to the wave of protest that has swept through China. In answer to questions at a news conference, Mr. Bush counseled "restraint," and he urged the demonstrators to keep their protest peaceful.

Mr. Bush did not criticize the Beijing Government, which has mobilized troops to put down the uprising, and he said it would be improper for the President of the United States to advise the students of "what their course of action should be."

**Baker Defines Interest**

Similarly, on Saturday, Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d said the United States' interest would not be served in seeing "significant instability" in China, and he said that American officials must not be seen as inciting a riot.

Why is the United States so scrupulous in respecting the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of one country, while it disregards the

principle in another case?

Administration officials say they want to avoid jeopardizing friendly relations with China built up over two decades. While they regard the "China card" as an outdated notion, they believe that the United States' strategic and geopolitical interests are much closer to China's than to those of the Soviet Union.

"The Government in trouble in China is a friendly Government with which we have had good relations," said a State Department official. "We don't wish that Government ill. There is a greater possibility of parallel interests and cooperation with China than with the Soviet Union." No Relations With Noriega

By contrast, the United States has no friendly relations - indeed, no relations at all - with the Noriega regime. It does not even recognize Manuel Solis Palma, whom General Noriega installed in February as the President of Panama.

The United States has had a considerable degree of influence in Panamanian affairs since the country declared its independence with Washington's backing in 1903. American officials have assumed that they could have a bigger say in the politics of a small country in their own hemisphere than in the affairs of a huge country far away.

General Noriega seems impervious to the most strident criticism of his human rights record by the United States. By contrast, China has been quick to take offense at criticism of its human rights record, so American officials say they do not wish or need to be shrill.

China's Ambassador to the United States, Han Xu, wrote a scathing letter to Congress last year to complain about a bill that would have penalized China for human rights violations in Tibet. He said it was "a gross interference in China's internal affairs."

China expressed similar resentment in February when Mr. Bush invited China's best-known dissident, Fang Lizhi, to a banquet in Beijing. Chinese policemen prevented Mr. Fang, a physics professor at Beijing University, from attending the dinner. A Different Society

Having served as chief of the American Mission in Beijing in 1974 and 1975, Mr. Bush presumably has some expertise in Chinese politics. But he acknowledged today, "I saw a society totally different than the one that exists in China today."

The Administration's cautious, low-key response has irritated some members of Congress. People at both ends of the political spectrum, from Senator Jesse Helms to Representative Stephen J. Solarz, said the United States had to speak up

more forcefully in support of the student protesters in Beijing.

Mr. Helms, a conservative Republican from North Carolina, does not see why the Administration is skittish about criticizing a Communist Government like the one in Beijing. At his urging, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Thursday adopted a resolution supporting the demonstrators. It also directed the Secretary of State to warn Chinese leaders that violent suppression of the protests would "seriously damage relations with the United States."

Mr. Solarz, a Brooklyn Democrat, said President Bush should "visibly and publicly identify himself" with the movement for democracy in China. On the NBC News program "Meet the Press," Mr. Solarz suggested that Mr. Bush show his support by meeting with some Chinese students now in the United States. Little Influence Is Cited

American officials said they had relatively little influence over the events in China, so they saw no reason to be explicit about how they might react. Other officials offered a contradictory explanation for their reticence, saying that the situation in China was volatile and that forceful public statements from Washington might have unpredictable consequences.

Administration officials said they preferred to pass messages to China through diplomatic channels, but there was no indication tonight that those messages went beyond Mr. Bush's general call for "restraint."

American officials also expressed a certain sympathy for Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese officials who have worked closely with the United States to improve Chinese-American relations.

Former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger voiced that sentiment today on the ABC News program "This Week." He said it was "a great tragedy" that Mr. Deng, China's senior leader, twice purged by Mao Zedong and twice rehabilitated, should now be a victim of the whirlwind he unleashed by liberalizing China's economic system. Mr. Deng was intelligent enough to know that "political reform had to follow" the vast economic changes he set in motion, Mr. Kissinger said.

American officials balance their desire for political changes in China with a desire to avoid a military crackdown. "I think this perhaps is a time for caution," Mr. Bush said, "because we aspire to see the Chinese people have democracy, but we do not exhort in a way that is going to stir up a military confrontation."

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