Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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11 April 2000

Mr. Chairman, Senators, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me start first with thanks, and with an observation about my fellow witness, Mr. Wei Jingsheng.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity today to explain why at present, and in the form and context in which it is presented, I oppose the grant of Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to the People's Republic of China.

To begin that explanation, let me say also what an honor it is to share the witness table with the man who perhaps more than any other speaks clearly of the need for human rights and democracy in China, and who, by and large is praised for doing so. Why do I say "by and large?" Because, particularly as we approach this vote, we hear more and more a line that seems to praise Wei but actually undermines him. This is the one that ennobles him and labels him as an "idealist"—and then moves on to say that his views are unrealistic, they are counsels of perfection, and that to pay too much heed to them in the real and practical world would undermine basic American interests.

Wei's voice is by no means the only Chinese voice being thus smothered under a mound of fragrant bouquets, but his is perhaps the most compelling, so let me start by saying: Wei Jingsheng is not an "idealist;" rather he is a very practical man, and what he is telling us about China is not some moralizing fantasy, but rather pretty much the unvarnished truth. The issues he points out are the most important currently facing China, not only morally but also practically. We need to face them, but from the President on down, we are not doing so.

Instead of assessing the facts as accurately as we can and then tailoring policies and strategies accordingly, our policy makers are building on hopes.

What is the reality of China today? It is of course complex. Some aspects are encouraging; some are worrying. Two in particular worry me:

The first is the Beijing government's increasing unwillingness to listen to its own people and its growing reliance on the use of force to maintain itself in power. The second, which flows from the first, is China's current military buildup and the steady drumbeat of military threats against its neighbors—Taiwan most obviously.

We have seen, over the past twelve months, attempts by the Beijing government to crush the China Democratic Party and the Falungong teaching; we have seen closures of hundreds of journals and newspapers; we have seen more and more websites blocked at China's internet portals, all of which are government controlled; and in the last few days we have learned of the miners' protests at Yangjiagangzi in Liaoning and the purge beginning of the Academy of Social Sciences.

All of this is of course morally contemptible, but there is more to it than that. Stable, competent governments do not behave like this. What all this repression in China means is that change is coming closer. What form that change will take—whether it will be peaceful and in the direction of democracy and openness, or a lurch into heightened repression, or just a decline into disorder—remains to be seen. But make no mistake, things are going to change.

Nor should it surprise us that China's current weak and repressive government should attempt to divert popular attention by waving the flag. History is full of examples of such regimes and teaches us a lesson as well. Those regimes have rarely succeeded in pacifying their own people. But they have regularly started wars. Over the past twelve months, the threat of war from Beijing has become almost routine.

To deal with this, we Americans require a unified and coherent policy in which all aspects of China, positive and negative, are brought together and dealt with in a consistent way. Do we have such a policy today?

I think we have all had the experience of finding a pretty picture in a mail order catalogue—maybe of a relationship with China that will be peaceful, profitable, and mutually beneficial. We send off our order with high hopes and to be fair to our friends in the mail order business, they are usually satisfied. But sometimes the following happens. A package arrives. Out of it tumble several precut pieces of wood, some metal fittings, several nuts and bolts in different sizes, a puzzling diagram and incomprehensible directions. That is the image I would use to evoke the actual policy that is currently being delivered ostensibly to create the pretty relationship in the picture.

I've labored over such mail order kits and been driven to conclude that they simply did not supply what was needed—recently I sent what purported to be a bathroom scale back to Ohio in disgust—and that is what I would say about the China policy of which immediate PNTR is so conspicuous a component. No matter what the blurb and the directions say or how you put it together, it will not deliver the kind of China or relationship with China that we all want. Here is why:

The whole point of the Administration approach is to isolate and insulate PNTR from every other aspect of the China relationship. The Administration pushed it forward even as Beijing issued its menacing White Paper on Taiwan; it has insisted on an early vote, to prevent this measure from being entangled in the sorts of issues that Mr. Wei has mentioned. The most important effect of the measure, moreover, will be PERMANENTLY to insulate trade relations with China from congressional scrutiny. In

other words, far from unifying our policy and aggregating our concerns, we are attempting to deal with economic issues as if they existed in a vacuum and had nothing to do with anything else.

The Administration argues that this will contribute to more responsible behavior by China, but logic suggests just the opposite. Thus if you remove the possibility that external aggression will have economic consequences, then the aggressor will have one less thing to worry about—and the chance of aggression will be increased.

Chinese behavior since the Clinton administration began moving in this direction confirms this. China's arms build up has only gained pace since the early 1990s and threats have increased. These threats are not only against Taiwan and other Asian states, but also directly against the United States—the acquisition of missile systems, for example, designed to destroy our aircraft carriers.

The unlinking of economic and security concerns has served only to convince the Chinese that we depend so much on their market and are so eager to invest in their country that we will sacrifice our security interests in order to do so. One can't blame them: much of American big business is now lobbying in favor of PNTR in spite of the deteriorating security situation and taking Beijing's side over Taiwan. As I watch the situation in Beijing, I worry that this miscalculation—which American policy has done so much to create—may push them over the edge into military action.

Now as a convinced free trader and old style economic liberal I believe that from an economic point of view PNTR is very much in both our and China's economic interest, and I would strongly support granting it IF the security and human rights

situation were improving. That is not the case now and for the reasons explained above I believe granting PNTR absent those conditions will only make things worse.

Ambassador Jack Matlock, in his memoirs of his service in Moscow, notes that a key to Washington's policy in the 1980s was that no economic concessions were to be made to the USSR until satisfaction was achieved on a range of security issues. This was a sound and realistic strategy, and it worked very well.

I wish that the White House understood this, and would tailor a China policy that took aboard that insight. But I simply don't see any sign of that happening. That being the case, the role of the Congress becomes critical. The prospect of the annual review of China's trading status will serve as a brake on Beijing, and the process itself provides an opportunity to discuss the crucial issues, even if the Executive would prefer not to.

I started by saying that Wei Jingsheng is a practical man in the sense that he does not fantasize about China but instead tells the truth, both about the situation and what needs to be done. Human rights in China are not a fantasy; they are a precondition for any lasting political stability and for economic growth. Non-use of military threats is not some distant ideal; it is likewise an absolute essential if Asia is to avoid disaster. We need to use all the tools at our disposal to promote those two goals.

The fantasy is to imagine that economic issues can somehow be insulated from the other parts of the picture. The fantasy is to imagine that removing the threat of economic consequences for oppression at home or military action abroad will improve Chinese behavior. It will not. Quite the opposite. Passing PNTR in a vacuum, without strong and unmistakable actions to address security and human rights concerns—and I

mean more than just talk—sends a dangerous message and one that, heeded in Beijing, could provide the margin for a decision in favor of war.