Will Congress Kowtow To Communist China?

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President Clinton's Chinese benefactors and the multinational importers are demanding that he bully Congress into continuing China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status, already renamed Normal Trade Relations (NTR). Now the plan is to grease China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) by making this favorable treatment permanent (PNTR).

It's not necessary for Congress to vote at all until after the WTO admits China, and China's WTO accession agreement with the other WTO members hasn't yet been written. But Clinton's Beijing and corporate backers are pressing for a vote now in order to assure China's WTO membership and eliminate Congress's controversial annual review.

The sad part about Clinton's plan is that the Republican leadership in Congress is trying to give him what he wants. This would be the ultimate success of former China lobbyist Sandy Berger's demand that Republicans lock arms with Clinton in the "bipartisan center."

PNTR would mean that Congress would henceforth be denied the opportunity to vote up or down on trade relations with China. PNTR would forfeit Congress's constitutional power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations."

Congress has been renewing Most Favored Nation status for China for two decades, and every year we are promised that our good faith actions will make China more democratic, more free-market oriented, and more humanitarian toward its own people. We gave China 18 years of MFN to prove this theory and China flunked the test.

The advocates of PNTR for China argue that trade with China is a vital factor in our prosperous economy. That's only true for the multinationals that are importing $83 billion a year of China's products, many of them made with slave labor.

But those who want to export U.S. products, including farmers, manufacturers and American workers, are losing out big time. They can sell only $13 billion of U.S. goods to China because China won't reciprocate and open its markets to us.

The Clintonian response to this inequity is to predict that these problems will disappear after China joins the WTO. Those who spout such fairy tales can probably be counted among those whose pockets are being lined by the Chinese through political contributions, lobbyists' or consultants' fees, or taxpayer-guaranteed investments.

With China's long history of thumbing its nose at trade agreements, it is unlikely that China will obey WTO rules. It's just as unlikely that the WTO will make any rulings in favor of the United States since it has already ruled against us repeatedly.

As to why we should have normal trade with Communist China but not with Communist Cuba, we are told another fairy tale that China is progressing toward capitalism and an entrepreneurial system. In truth, China is ruled by a government-underworld alliance in which sales of weapons and human beings, theft of Western intellectual property, drug trafficking, smuggling and prostitution have merged with legitimate enterprises, all owned by former Communists and their princelings who have grabbed control of former state-owned industries under the guise of privatization.

As Rep. Tom Campbell (R-CA) points out, China subsidizes its industries massively through its state-directed banking system, which is not open to foreign competition or inspection. It is ridiculous to allow China-subsidized industries a free ride to compete in America.

Meanwhile, the $70 billion a year ($83 billion minus $13 billion) profit which China rakes in through its imbalance of trade is going right into China's military-industrial complex. Not only does China have 13 intercontinental ballistic missiles targeted on U.S. cities, but Beijing is selling weapons to our enemies all the way from AK-47 assault rifles to Los Angeles street gangs to helping Libya build long- range missiles.

China has more people in jail today than 11 years ago when the students were massacred in Tiananmen Square, and religious persecution continues to be a world scandal. Even the U.S. State Department's 1999 Human Rights Report on China says: "Elements of the security apparatus employed torture and other degrading treatment in dealing with detainees and prisoners. . . . officials used electric shocks, prolonged

periods of solitary confinement, incommunicado detention, beatings, shackles, and other forms of abuse against detained men and women."

Voting for PNTR would abandon forever our ability to checkmate China's inhumanity, thefts and belligerent behavior. No longer would we be able to challenge China's record on human rights abuses, religious persecution, forced abortions, espionage, illegal campaign contributions, trade imbalances, threats against Taiwan, potential threats against the Panama Canal, or other challenges to our national security.

Clinking glasses with Communists two years ago, Clinton signaled to the world whose side he is on. If Congress awards Permanent Normal Trade status to an undeserving China, Congress will give the Beijing Communists a blank check to rule, trade, and threaten as they please.

Whose side is Congress on? The vote on MFN for China is a great deal more important to truth, justice, morality and the rule of law than last year's vote on impeachment.