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RED CHINA'S TEMPER TANTRUM

It certainly doesn't pay to be gracious and generous to the Red Chinese. Last August, President Reagan went overboard and gave them many more concessions than he should have given, certainly more than they had any right to request.

And what is the result? Red China has been having a temper tantrum over an interview President Ronald Reagan gave to the conservative weekly Human Events. In a blistering statement, Red China charged that Reagan took Sino-American relations "a grave step backward" and accused him of violating an agreement to reduce weapons sales to Taiwan.

The arrogance of the Red Chinese statement is something to behold. Peking said that Red China would not tolerate the United States' "trampling on solemn agreements."

This tantrum came shortly after Secretary of State George P. Schultz returned from his four-day mission to Peking. After the good fellowship of many toasts, he proclaimed that his visit had "set the stage for renewed advances built on a stronger foundation of confidence and mutual trust."

The Red Chinese even had the nerve to protest the opening of a Taiwan liaison office in Boston and the attendance of National Security Adviser William P. Clark at a reception given by Taiwan representatives in Washington last October.

How do you assess the gall of a foreign government protesting a U.S. official's attendance at a reception in our own nation's capital, and in the same breath accusing Reagan of "an interference in China's internal affairs" when he linked the question of future U.S. arms sales to Taiwan with China's peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue?

Red China's attitude proves that it is a mistake for the Reagan Administration to try to appease, conciliate or pacify Red China. Mainland China will continue to try to bully us into escalating concessions, and will never develop any sense of noblesse oblige.

The biggest difficulty we have with Red China today is not Taiwan, but the Joint Communique of the United States and the People's Republic of China issued on August 17, 1982. That is a problem between the two countries because the Reagan Administration was

too generous with the Red Chinese, and they interpreted generosity as weakness.

The unfortunate words that caused the problem are: "The United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years . . . and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution."

The trouble with that statement is that the Taiwan Relations Act, which is current law in the United States, binds our country to "make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such a quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability ... [and] the President and the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services based solely upon their judgment and the needs of Taiwan..."

Putting aside all the verbiage, the real issue is, will Taiwan remain a free and independent (and prosperous) country -- or will we stand by and allow it to be taken over by the Red Chinese as they have repeatedly threatened to do? So long as we remain committed to Taiwan's freedom, then the next question is, who will decide what weapons we sell to Taiwan, the United States or Red China?

China's temper tantrum is precisely on the point that Red China thinks Red China has the right to decide what weapons we are permitted to sell to Taiwan. If Red China thinks it has that right, no wonder it thinks it has the right to decide which receptions U.S. National Security Adviser Clark attends in Washington, D.C.

The issue is not so much Red China's brazen attempt to exert sovereignty over Taiwan, but America's sovereignty over our own policies and our own arms sales to a free, friendly, and faithful ally. So how should the Reagan Administration respond to Red China's temper tantrum?

Here is an easy answer which Red China would clearly understand. Ignore all the undiplomatic rhetoric and instead issue a news release granting immediate political asylum to the 19-year-old Red Chinese tennis star, Hu Na, whose application on the ground of political persecution has been shuffling around the corridors of our State Department's bureaucracy since last August.