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# Scientific Relations with China

President Carter's decision to normalize relations with China has met a mixed public response. However, in scientific and educational circles the reaction is more favorable. There one finds awareness and appreciation of the intellectual potentials of the Chinese, of the great inventive contributions during past millennia, and a feeling that the United States should be on friendly terms with a nation that includes one-fourth of the world's population. U.S. scientists are disposed to give Chinese visiting scholars a warm welcome and many are eager to spend some time in China. The extent of interchange and cooperation will be determined by the Chinese rather than by reluctance here.

Current official attitudes of the Chinese toward interaction are in sharp contrast to those that prevailed only a few years ago. From 1948 to 1971 there were few contacts. Then a gradual change occurred in which science and technology had a major role. A pivotal moment was the Nixon visit to China in 1972. But even before that, scholarly groups here were trying to foster relationships. In 1966 a Committee on Scholarly Communication with Mainland China was formed to explore and pursue opportunities to facilitate scientific and other scholarly communication. The Committee included four major sectors of American scholarly activities—the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Social Science Research Council.

Early efforts to achieve a working relationship with China were not fruitful, but in 1972 the Committee, renamed the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China, became a major factor in exchanges. From 1972 through 1978 the Committee and its staff served as hosts to 37 Chinese scientific delegations to the United States. Since the spring of 1973 the Committee has sent 30 American scholarly delegations to China, selecting the exchange topics and participants.

This organized effort was supplemented by private groups and individuals. Notably effective were Chinese-Americans, some of whom prepared trip reports that were published. The various visits made clear to the Chinese that a good and friendly climate for interchange existed.

In July 1978 President Carter sent his science adviser, Frank Press, and a delegation of heads of science and technology-related government agencies to China. Their mission was to investigate the possibility of cooperation going beyond the survey trips. Press had earlier served as chairman of the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China and he had been a member of an American visiting delegation. This background was helpful in discussions leading to opening the way for serious scholarly cooperation. The Press mission probably had a significance that went beyond scholarship. When two major powers make an agreement, many factors are involved. But in the normalization of relations, considerations of scientific and technological interchange surely were an important factor.

With the resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, interchange will occur through other mechanisms such as commercial relationships and exchanges between universities. To obtain information to better formulate a cooperative program, most of the members of the Board of Directors of AAAS visited China from 14 November to 3 December 1978. The delegation was able to examine a broad cross section of Chinese life, education, and science and technology. In the course of the visit, many hundreds of photographs were taken both on film and in the mind. In this issue there are a few pictures and impressions of changing scenes in China in late 1978. What is presented is somewhat different, less euphoric than the views of earlier visitors. In turn, it is to be expected that what will be reported a few years hence will differ from the present portrayal, for the vast energy of China is being channeled in new directions and change for better or worse is inevitable.—PHILIP H. ABELSON