

LETTERS

Mosher's Expulsion from Stanford

The article by Marjorie Sun, "The mysterious expulsion of Steven Mosher" (News and Comment, 13 May, p. 692), on the reasons for the termination of my doctoral candidacy in anthropology by Stanford University contains a number of errors of fact and interpretation. By publicly lending credence to groundless rumors spawned and spread by those who wish me ill, *Science* has fallen into Stanford's error. As a first step toward correcting the record, I list the most blatant of these errors below.

It is not true, as Sun quotes unnamed "sources" as alleging, that the Stanford confidential report asserts that I was "involved in smuggling and in giving extraordinary gifts to collect [my] data."

It is not true that "[I] tried to take antiquities out of the country without proper authorization and gave remarkable gifts to [my] research subjects." Sun claims that she gleaned this information from "interviews with department faculty members and others outside Stanford," but again not a single individual is willing to be quoted as the source for this bizarre allegation. The article does go on to admit that the anonymous informants "refused to specify the exact nature of the antiquities or the gifts." This is hardly surprising, since they do not exist.

It is not true that "consulate officials determined that [my] bag contained more than just research papers and concluded that the Chinese suspicions [that I was an intelligence agent?] warranted investigation." This statement, which Sun attributes to unnamed "sources in China at the time," is a complete inversion of the truth: Consulate officials determined that my bags (there were two) contained only research papers and concluded that the Chinese suspicions were unwarranted.

It is not true that "[Maggie So] told U.S. consulate officials and, later, the Stanford committee that [I] was enticing people with gifts and favors to pave the way for his research. He was handing out small appliances." My distraught former spouse made several wild allegations of personal and professional misconduct—all false—to consulate officials and later to Stanford after she knew that there was no possibility of a reconciliation between us, but the above listed are not among them. Neither are these allegations mentioned in the confidential Stanford report. The truth is that, while I invited informants to smoke cigarettes and drink tea during interviews, and

sometimes invited them to meals afterwards, such was the extent of my largesse.

It is not true that Stanford has "persuasive evidence of my misconduct." The allegations that Stanford found so strangely persuasive come entirely from two highly unreliable sources: (i) the mainland Chinese regime, which draws up a new list of charges against me every time it is asked and (ii) the woman I divorced, who warned me beforehand that if I took this step she would stop at nothing in order to destroy me professionally. Stanford encouraged her in this slanderous exercise, drafted for her the statement that she reluctantly signed, and placated her fears that I would file a suit charging libel by promising that her whereabouts would be kept secret.

It is not true that "[my] own letters to the [Stanford investigating committee] and others were incriminating." This statement, attributed by Sun to unnamed "members of the anthropology department," is not only an out-and-out falsehood, it is also an obtuse one. If Stanford faculty really possessed any communication from me in the nature of a "confession," then they surely would have produced it by now to still the public outcry that my expulsion has produced. They have not done so because no such document exists.

It is not true that Stanford "cannot reveal [the confidential report] without endangering innocent persons, which include Chinese peasants." The set of rumors that is the Stanford report have circulated freely on both sides of the Pacific for the last 2 years and are well known to the Peking regime (not least because they were in large part invented by it). Over this time, however, nothing untoward has happened in the locale where I did my research. I conclude from this happy state of affairs that the release of the report would not endanger my informants. It is from sheer self-interest that Stanford is stonewalling: When the report is made public, as it ultimately will be, it will be clear that I have been the victim of an injustice.

Finally, Stanford's pleas to the contrary notwithstanding, the central faculty motive for expelling me was that I dared publish material on violations of human rights occurring in the abortion campaign of the People's Republic of China. In October 1981, when I first returned to Stanford in the hope of dispelling the cloud of rumors that had come to hang over my China research, I met with Clifford Barnett, the chairman of the anthropology department. He admitted to me that "no one really takes the rumors surrounding your fieldwork seri-

ously. What really has faculty members hot under the collar was your publication of the article and pictures in Taiwan." So hot under the collar that they expelled me from the Ph.D. program.

I hope that *Science* and its readers would urge Stanford to make its confidential report public so that the scientific community can judge for itself whether or not a wrong has been committed in denying me the doctorate. As far as my academic qualifications for the degree are concerned, I offer my first report on my China research, *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese*.

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Mosher again makes the charge that he was dismissed from the Ph.D. program by a unanimous vote of departmental faculty because he blew the whistle on the excesses of the Chinese birth control program. This statement is at complete variance with the ad hoc investigating committee report which Mosher has in his possession along with the pertinent documents. On this issue, as on all others, the report was most specific. It said, "We feel that although the Chinese are clearly linking Mosher's article to the restrictions they are imposing on foreign scholars, we cannot hold Mosher responsible for actions the Chinese are taking. Although we believe that Mosher was unwise to publish his article in a popular Taiwanese weekly where it would be read as a political attack on the PRC (People's Republic of China), we cannot judge this act to be misconduct both because we are not convinced that Mosher fully understood the implications of his choice of publishing medium and because we believe that Mosher's right to publish where he chooses is protected by the right to freedom of speech."

The report consists of 47 pages of single-spaced text and close to another 50 pages of appended documentation. The report is so long because it does not argue single-mindedly a case against Mosher. Rather, the credibility of all testimony and evidence is argued both for and against Mosher. None of the testimony, whether from Mosher's former wife, from an official of the PRC, or from any other person, was accepted by the committee at face value. Independent corroboration was obtained for all of the findings against Mosher. There is persuasive evidence of misconduct, and the department welcomes the review of the case now in progress by another committee that includes an anthropolo-

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gist from outside Stanford. This review is in response to the grievance Mosher has filed with the university (News and Comment, 10 June, p. 1133). We are painfully aware that we have stated the reasons that did not figure in Mosher's dismissal but we have not released the specific reasons for his dismissal. The committee concluded on the basis of the evidence and the corroborating statement in writing Mosher made to someone who provided testimony to the committee that release of the report would endanger innocent persons. The innocent persons in question are not Chinese officials nor Mosher's former wife. Mosher is aware of the grounds for our refusal to publicly release the report and that those grounds preclude a change in our position about release. In terms of departmental self-interest, we have everything to gain from release of the report. Mosher has everything to lose from public dissemination of the report that is in his possession. The grounds for dismissal are fully explored, documented, and persuasive.

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According to information that has come to our attention since the *Science* article was published, consular officials did not open the bag that Mosher left at the consulate. Contrary to both our article and Mosher's account, they apparently made no determination, based on the contents of Mosher's luggage, as to whether Chinese suspicions did or did not warrant further investigation. As stated in the article, there is no evidence that Mosher engaged in intelligence activities. As for other points raised in the letters from Mosher and Stanford professor Barnett, we would welcome the release of the full report by either party to clear up uncertainty about the reasons for his dismissal from the Ph.D. program.—Eds.

For the Stanford anthropology department to act in the Mosher case in a closed forum on the basis of undisclosed accusations is to strike at the heart of due process. It cannot but have a dampening effect on field research by other scholars.

The paramount problem with the decision to expel Mosher is that it shifts the emphasis from a researcher's important findings to his alleged indiscretions. In a five-page bill of particulars sent by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to Stanford, not a single statement took issue with the facts: that abortions are

routinely and systematically taking place in the seventh to ninth months of pregnancy; that infanticide has also been routinely practiced, especially when the newborn was a girl; and, perhaps most serious of all, that these practices reflect an official, or at least established, policy of the People's Republic of China. The academic response from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to these awesome charges is a series of allegations about Mosher that, in any other context, or under any other circumstances, would be considered trivial and pale in comparison with Mosher's research.

That Mosher pushed enough buttons to set off a cluster of sirens goes without saying. That such actions required the punishment that was meted out is quite another thing. Mosher's student status made him vulnerable to attack. To claim, as some informants have, that there has never been an attempt to suppress his research findings, but only to maintain standards of probity and proper demeanor, misses the point: the act of depriving Mosher of his degree is ultimately an act of delegitimation, making what he has to say about China appear to be the work of a crank or, at least, of someone without the authority vested by a major graduate department. The punishment—dismissal from the graduate program—does not fit the crime, poor personal conduct while engaging in field research.

The decision to dismiss Mosher from the Stanford anthropology program is a serious blow to social science integrity. It is a questionable extension of due process, and, worse, a denial of research autonomy. It means that the research process is not to be guided or guarded by internal checks and balances (that is, by the findings of other researchers) but rather by the will of the state. Eleven democratic professors have succumbed to the totalitarian temptation. They have chosen a course of action in which power rather than truth prevails. Under such circumstances, the only normal course of action can be to restore Mosher to his candidate status and evaluate his scholarship, not his behavior, either by full departmental reconsideration or by the university itself. In matters of academic freedom and individual liberty, the administration has a responsibility, no less than a right, to overturn poor departmental decisions.

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*Horowitz has written an article about the Mosher case which will appear in the July-August issue of *Society*.