

FBI Cites National Security

2/7/74
Visitors to China Questioned

By Jay Mathews

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The FBI for the past two years has been quietly interrogating selected Americans—and their friends and relatives—from among the hundreds who have returned from visits to the People's Republic of China.

The unannounced FBI investigation has often focused on Americans of Chinese descent and Americans who have openly expressed sympathy for the Communist government of mainland China.

An FBI spokesman said yes-

terday the bureau had received "99 per cent" cooperation from individuals questioned and that the interrogations were based on information about possible threats to national security.

Beverly Fincher, a Chinese-American linguist teaching at Dartmouth College, said two men who said they were FBI agents appeared at her doorstep unannounced one morning and asked her to identify friends she thought might be particularly close to the Chinese government.

Van S. Lung, a Washington

restaurant owner with outspoken sympathies for the mainland government, said he has never been interviewed, but his sister, contacted by The Washington Post in New Rochelle, N.Y., said two men identifying themselves as FBI agents questioned her about Lung.

Helen Hays, the director of the Chinese Cultural center in Washington, said she called the FBI to insist on a personal interview when she discovered agents had attempted to question a dean at Federal City

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College—the center's sponsor—about her.

In an oblique reference to the investigation in its 1973 annual report, the bureau notes that "travel by United States residents to mainland China has been increasing since 1971, and a substantial further increase is anticipated. The FBI must take cognizance of the fact that such travelers could come to the attention of PRC (People's Republic of China) intelligence."

An FBI spokesman said he could not reveal the number of travelers who had been questioned or if any Chinese threats to American security had been uncovered. He described the probe as part of the bureau's longtime practice of contracting recent visitors to Communist countries "if information made available to us indicates it is advisable to contact them."

The spokesman said everyone approached by the FBI has the right to refuse to be interviewed, but that "99 per cent of them have been extremely cooperative and very nice."

According to the dozen persons contacted by The Post, the FBI questioning varied. Some were simply asked to describe their trips. Some were asked if they had been threatened by the Chinese government. Some were asked if they visited friends or relatives living in China.

a series of both FBI and CIA. One who did refuse, Harvard University researcher Roxane Witke, said yesterday she could not understand what her visit had to do with the internal security of the United States.

Mrs. Witke returned to the United States in September, 1972, after a visit to China during which she recorded 50 to 60 hours of interviews with Chiang Ching, the wife of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung. An FBI agent called to ask for an interview, saying "we want to be enlightened," Mrs. Witke said. "That was their language. I used slightly stronger language. I said I didn't think my scholarly work was any business of the government."

The FBI spokesman, asked about interviews like that of Mrs. Witke's, said an interview would be justified if "we got information that while these persons were in China, they were contacted by intelligence agents, or that they were compromised while they were over there."

"I think it's only natural that they should want to come and talk to me," said C. K. Jen, a physicist at Johns Hopkins University who led a delegation of Chinese-American scientists to China in 1972. Jen said he gladly cooperated with interviews following his trip.

But Mrs. Fincher, the Dartmouth linguist, said she still wonders what is in the bureau's files. "Right now, it's the detente period," she said. "The information they got may not be used against us. But who knows what situation will develop?"