

Incorporating Responsibility 2008 Campaign Update

A Call for a Mao-Free Olympics

An open letter by a group of Chinese intellectuals suggests that the 2008 Olympics presents an opportunity literally to remove Mao Zedong from his pedestal and present a more rational and equitable China to the international community. The open letter was signed by Yu Jie, Wang Guangze and Liu Xiaobo in China, and Hu Ping, Chen Kuide and Zhang Weiguo in the United States, and published in the December 2003 issue of Hong Kong's Kai Fang (Open Magazine) under the title, "An Appeal for the Removal of the Corpse of Mao Zedong from Beijing."

Mao Zedong was born on December 26, 1893 and died on September 9, 1976. He was a political leader who played an enormous role in shaping the destiny of China during the twentieth century. This year [2003] is the 110th anniversary of Mao's birth.

For several thousand years, the Chinese nation, caught in the grip of despotism, experienced one disaster after another. Dynastic changes were little more than hooligans forming and re-forming clans in endless repetition from time immemorial.

In more recent times, Western powers used gun ships to blow open the gates to China. Faced with fundamental change of a kind unseen for 5,000 years, several generations of Chinese waged a bitter struggle for the future of their country in the form of the "Self-strengthening Movement," the Movement for Constitutional Reform, the revolution to overthrow Manchu rule and the May Fourth Movement. The establishment in 1911 of the Republic of China gave Asia its first republican government and launched the attempt to introduce a democratic, constitutional government. Instead, what followed were chaotic warlord conflicts and the political "tutelage" that came with Kuomintang rule. Moreover, full-scale aggression by Japan ushered in a profound crisis of national survival.

In 1945, China's victory in the war of national resistance ushered in an excellent opportunity for democratization. However, the mutually destructive rivalry between the

Communist Party and the Kuomintang ruled out the possibility of peaceful coexistence and free elections, while the collapse of peace talks bred bitter hatreds among fellow Chinese that led to carnage on a massive scale. The victorious Communist Party occupied the mainland while the defeated Kuomintang fled to Taiwan to continue its rule as the Republic of China.

The newly established Communist regime was in fact the personal dictatorship of Mao Zedong. The main purpose of the new government on the mainland should have been that of national recuperation, national reconciliation and national reconstruction; but soon after its formation, ceaseless, turbulent political movements broke out on a national scale. Once Mao Zedong became supreme leader, not only did he fail to vigorously promote economic reconstruction and deliver on the promises of constitutional government made before the Communists seized power, but he conducted wide-scale political suppression within and outside of the Party under the slogan of "permanent revolution," culminating in the launch of the Great Cultural Revolution, which became known to posterity as "the ten-year calamity."

COUNTLESS CRIMES UNDER MAO'S RULE

What did Mao Zedong do for the Chinese people during the 27 years between October 1, 1949, when he proclaimed from Tiananmen Gate that the Chinese people had "stood up," and September 9, 1976, when he died, an isolated, forsaken figure?

Mao tried to eliminate social class in China using the theory of "class struggle." He utilized theories of "violent revolution" to carry out the politics of terror. As a result of the "Movement to Suppress Counter-revolutionaries" and the "Three- and Five-Anti" movements of the early years of the regime, the "Anti-Rightist" movement and the "Cultural Revolution," millions of people were killed or otherwise ruined.

Under Mao's rule, China was not only extremely totalitarian, it was a highly stratified nation thanks to the practice of "status discrimination." The people of China were divided into two categories inhabiting mutu-

ally exclusive worlds. Urban residents enjoyed all the system's advantages while peasants were subjected to cruel exploitation and discrimination. In essence, this system of status discrimination was no different than barbaric forms of rural slavery and racial discrimination. The offspring of peasant families remained peasants in a modern version of the system whereby slavery was passed on through generations. Moreover, compared with the various kinds of discriminatory systems practiced in other parts of the world, it is clear that China's was unprecedented in terms of the size of the country and the number of people affected. More than 90 percent of the population, i.e., China's peasants, suffered under this system of discrimination.

Under Mao, the much-vaunted economic achievements violated economic rules in deference to political goals such as the appeal to "catch up with England, and overtake the United States." Whether or not people had enough to eat was of no concern. The "Great Leap Forward," a movement that had its origins in Mao's wildest fantasies, produced famine on an unprecedented scale. Even by the most conservative estimates, more than 30 million people died. For nearly 30 years, ordinary people experienced extreme shortages in an era of rationing and coupon economy.

Under Mao, idiocies such as the drive to turn every home into a steel furnace inflicted enormous ecological damage. A China rich in resources was transformed into one of the most environmentally damaged countries in the world.

Under Mao, China's precious resources were squandered on the development of nuclear weapons to satisfy the Chairman's ambition to confront the two superpowers as the pre-eminent leader of the Communist world. The diplomatic consequence of Mao's ambition was to isolate China from the international community.

Under Mao, the absurd concept of "strength in numbers" caused a population explosion that to this day remains a major obstacle to national modernization.

Under Mao, the ideological obsession with "attacking feudalism, capitalism and revisionism" severed links with traditional

Chinese culture, with modern Chinese culture and with Western civilization, deliberately removing the country from the mainstream of human civilization. Mao instilled in people's minds a philosophy of cruel struggle and revolutionary superstition. Hatred took the place of love and tolerance; the barbarism of "rebellion for its own sake" replaced rationality and love of peace, and elevated and sanctified the "law of the jungle" in governing human relations.

Mao Zedong's writings poisoned the soul and the language of the Chinese race, and his violent, hate-filled, loutish language is perpetuated to this day. Feelings of love, sympathy and respect were destroyed so that even now the Chinese people languish in a spiritual condition bereft of morality and natural instinct.

Mao Zedong's crimes were innumerable. As the historian Yu Yingshi has put it:

"Whatever Mao's intentions, he bears overwhelming personal responsibility for the disasters China suffered during his rule. The deaths of millions of Chinese; the destruction of countless families; the suppression of the vitality of Chinese society; the repeated setbacks to the cause of China's modernization—all these were the fruits of his 27-year reign. Mao turned the thoughts flashing across his mind during his sleepless nights into ever more absurd ideas designed to "shake the heavens." And, thanks to his absolute power and extraordinary will, he could carry all before him—right through to implementation. . . . Mao's rule was an era of bloodshed and grave injustice; it was an era when decent instincts were abandoned, when black became white . . ."

USING PUBLIC FUNDS TO WORSHIP A CORPSE

Although Mao had requested cremation following his death, and described himself as a materialist and a Marxist, his successors decided to preserve his corpse and place it on public display. Indeed, this was a Politburo decision. In 1976, although the national economy was "close to collapse" (in the words of the Sixth Plenum of the 11th Central Committee), an astronomical sum of public funding was spent on constructing a mausoleum for the eternal preservation of Mao's body.

Work was finished on the mausoleum in

Tiananmen Square on August 20, 1977, and Mao's corpse and internal organs, having been immersed in formaldehyde for preservation, were transported to the building. The corpse was then placed in a crystal coffin. Only five corpses of national leaders (those of Lenin, Stalin, Ho Chi Min, Mao and Kim Il-Sung) have been placed on public display so that the masses "can look on them with reverence." All of the countries that did so were or are ruled by Communist parties, making this a genuine characteristic of socialism!

Mao Zedong's corpse has been on public display for 27 years. However, the work of preserving his remains is not finished, but rather has become a long-term project. To this end, the authorities have formed a "Mao Zedong Mausoleum Management Bureau" headed by Xu Jing, an expert who took part in the work of preserving the corpse. Its work is never-ending, and at the end of each year a technical symposium is held to review new developments in preservation technology.

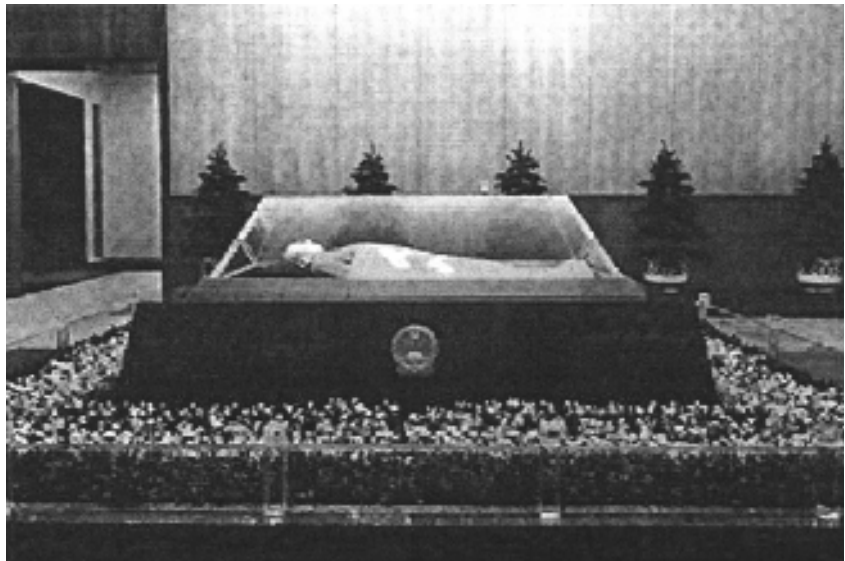
According to Zhu Peikang, a member of the standing committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference who has taken part in these proceedings, there was a setback in 1999, forcing closure of the mausoleum. Only after enormous effort was Mao's corpse restored to its original state. Preserving Mao's corpse involves a long-term struggle on the part of experts against the constant invasion of bacteria and oxygen through every cavity, and the experts can only respond defen-

sively. In dialectical terms, preservation is relative while decay is absolute. Mao's corpse cannot be preserved indefinitely; decay will only be arrested through continual advances in the science of preservation. This is why it would be better to remove the corpse now before it becomes putrid and maggot-ridden.

REMOVE MAO'S CORPSE AND IMAGE FROM TIANANMEN

We believe that the time is ripe to remove Mao Zedong's corpse from the mausoleum and turn the building into a museum of the Cultural Revolution, as the writer Ba Jin has suggested, and to take down Mao's image from Tiananmen Gate and return Tiananmen Square to the public. It could then become a venue for national events in which the people can express their political aspirations. To do so would not only restore the original purpose of the Square, it would mark the start of a process of alleviating the sense of national grievance and violence rampant in Chinese society.

When Deng Xiaoping was in charge he began moving China away from the era of "politics in command" championed by Mao and focused on economic construction. During the 1980s, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, successive secretaries general of the Communist Party, attempted to introduce political change as part of broad-based reform. Later, Jiang Zemin and then Hu Jintao advocated the "Three Represents" and the "New Three Principles of the People" in the hope that the Communist



Worth worshipping?

Party might be able to transform itself from a “revolutionary party” into a “ruling party,” and from a “party of the proletariat” into a party of “the whole people.” Whatever the actual consequences of such moves, there can be little doubt that China’s Communist leaders now recognize that the bloody policies of Mao Zedong’s era cannot deliver stability, and that if further pursued they will prevent China’s return to the mainstream of world civilization.

We do not preach hatred or revenge; we esteem repentance and forgiveness. We understand that there are all sorts of opinions of Mao Zedong, but we oppose the practice of “corpse worship,” a relic of slave societies.

As far as redressing the wounds of history is concerned, we applaud the approach of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission: only when the truth is revealed is reconciliation possible. Speaking at an inquiry into a massacre that took place during the apartheid era, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, offered the following summarization:

“We have been greatly moved by the persistence of the human spirit. Those who had been downtrodden and oppressed refused to submit to suffering, violence and threats. They refused to abandon the hope of freedom because they knew that they deserved a much better destiny than the injustice and suppression meted out to them. They refused to bow their heads to coercion. The spirit of forgiveness demonstrated (in such circumstances) almost defies belief. People refused to be consumed by suffering and hatred. They wanted to meet those who oppressed them and trampled on their rights and dignity, and do so in a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation. Their overwhelming desire was to know the truth, to know the crimes that had been committed in order to forgive those who committed them”.

We believe that the Chinese people have the capacity to acquire such an elevated sense of humanity, and hope that China’s future will brim with the brilliant rays of peace and love. Tutu said in conclusion:

“We were so moved that tears trickled down our cheeks. We laughed heartily. We

were silent. We realised that our dark days . . . were over. We had endured our suffering and we realised we could indeed overcome our past conflicts, link hands and realize our common humanity . . . ”

Our wish is to promote this spirit of lenience and tolerance, and our hope is that the Chinese can become a people full of such forgiveness. Nobody wants to see turmoil in China. Should turmoil occur it is possible that the corpse of Mao Zedong would suffer the same fate as that of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and be dashed to the ground amid public protests. This is why we say that removing Mao’s corpse could be the start of a reconciliation process. Indeed, removing the corpse, reassessing Mao Thought and abandoning the philosophy of struggle and the worship of violence he championed are essential steps towards implementing democracy in China, and towards promoting economic freedom and cultural pluralism.

ASSUAGE NATIONAL GRIEF AND PROMOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

We believe that the time is ripe to resolve the sense of national grief felt by the Chinese people. The bitterness and hatred fostered during Mao’s years in power require such a process of reconciliation. We hope that the Chinese nation can rediscover its love and compassion, recover its esteem for honesty and virtue, kind-heartedness and benevolence, and its love of moderation.

We realize that this cannot be accomplished overnight. However, as a first step, we call for the removal of Mao’s corpse to his native village in Shaoshan, where it can rest in peace in accordance with Chinese custom. Such a move would elevate the status of Beijing to that of a civilized capital fit to stage a “civilized Olympics” in 2008. We certainly do not want to see the farce of the Olympic flag flying over a city in which a corpse is worshiped.

Removal of the corpse would help extract the poison planted in the Chinese soul by Mao Thought while at the same time ending the cult of personality. This would constitute an important political lesson.

We also regard this as an opportunity to encourage greater public involvement in politics; to formulate a timetable for political reform; to lift the ban on the formation

of new political parties and new publications; to introduce elections on a gradual basis; and to establish a democratic republic in reality as well as in name. We believe that it is only through establishing broad reconciliation between different groups in society, between those in the Communist Party and those outside of it, and between those of different beliefs, that the Chinese nation can enjoy lasting health and happiness.

Translated by Graham Hutchings

POSTSCRIPT

On December 26, 2003, Chinese president Hu Jintao commemorated the 100th anniversary of Mao’s birth in a keynote speech at a CPC Central Committee workshop. He noted, “Comrade Mao Zedong’s greatest and most outstanding contribution was to lead our Party and our people to find the correct path to a new democratic revolution, and to complete the task of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism through the establishment of the People’s Republic of China.” While observing that Mao had committed “serious errors” during the Cultural Revolution in the last years of his rule, Hu attributed the errors to the unprecedented challenges of creating socialism with Chinese characteristics and to the influences of the “complicated international environment” of the times, and he quoted Deng Xiaoping as saying that Mao’s errors were secondary to his historical achievements as a great revolutionary. Before the workshop Hu and other top officials paid tribute by bowing three times to a statue of Mao at the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall.

The World Summit on Information Society

Promises Disconnected from Reality

BY SHARON HOM AND AMY TAI

As part of its Incorporating Responsibility 2008 campaign (IR 2008), HRIC participates in international conferences to ensure that human rights are at the core of decision-making processes. HRIC monitors China's impact in these multilateral fora as well as the impact of these processes on China. This report identifies some of the challenges encountered at the World Summit on Information Society, and points out the tensions between rapid economic and technological infrastructure development and the protection of core human rights.

As the tenth world summit since 1992,¹ the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva had the ambitious goal of producing a shared global vision for an information society and a concrete plan of action. These outcomes were to be the result of an inclusive process providing an opportunity for stakeholders to assemble, discuss and implement policies that use information and communication technology (ICT) to serve the needs of all people.²

With its enormous economic and political power, and its increasing integration into global trade and human rights regimes, China has a prominent and influential role in this multilateral process, especially in light of the impressive development of its technology infrastructure. Trade policy debates and economic market reform arguments often reflect implicit assumptions that free markets or rule of law reforms will result in greater democracy or openness for civil society; but in China's case it is necessary to critically examine these assumptions, and in particular to monitor both the impact of increasing global participation on China's development and China's impact on these multilateral processes and institutions. China's strict regulation of its domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs),³ its suppression of democracy advocates, journalists, labor activists and religious practitioners, and its clear willing-

ness to use its economic and political clout internationally to exclude independent voices it perceives as critical all require careful attention from the international community.

At the UN Commission on Human Rights, China has also been a leading voice calling for limits on NGO participation, and vociferously opposed an initial bid for ECOSOC consultative status by Human Rights in China (HRIC).⁴ In the case of the WSIS, HRIC, like many other NGOs, had to run the gauntlet of an apparently politicized accreditation process. Despite (or perhaps because of) our work to promote freedom of expression and association, and our advocacy on behalf of political prisoners and human rights defenders including journalists and Internet activists, HRIC was not recommended for accreditation by the WSIS Secretariat.⁵ This was especially surprising in light of HRIC's receiving accreditation as an NGO observer to the Fifth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial in Cancun, where HRIC was able to raise human rights issues related to China's WTO accession and economic development policies.⁶ Ironically, HRIC was officially recognized by a multilateral trade body as having relevant expertise to make an NGO contribution, but not by a summit focused on an issue—building an inclusive and democratic information society—that is core to HRIC's human rights mission and program work.

Despite obstacles faced during the accreditation process, HRIC was able to send representatives to the WSIS through affiliated NGOs. During the WSIS, HRIC actively participated in various NGO and civil society caucus events, including presentations on peace-building processes at the Youth Caucus,⁷ communications and human rights at the World Forum on Communication Rights,⁸ and a workshop on state security and state secrets at the ICT4D, organized jointly by the Swiss Agency for Development and the Global Knowledge Partnership.⁹ The week ended with a well-attended press conference organized by the Human Rights Caucus, where Diana Bronson of Rights and Democracy presented on behalf of the caucus an evaluation of the WSIS outcomes. HRIC's Sharon Hom and Souhayr Belhassen from OMCT and the Tunisian Human Rights League highlighted human rights issues in China and Tunisia, respectively.¹⁰

ALTERNATE REALITIES

The dominant story of China's Internet development circulated by mainstream media and in policy circles is one of breathtaking technological leapfrogging, breeding great hopes in the Internet's potential to democratize a closed society. With more than 80 million Internet users and 240 million mobile phones,¹¹ China's technological infrastructure development has become a success story for developing countries and market- and growth-driven reform, and has made China both a poster child and a significant government player in the WSIS process.

Less frequently cited is the “out of sight-out of mind” story of serious human rights abuses—including violations of the right to freedom of expression and association and the rights to information, life, health and education. This is the story of hundreds of millions who live in poverty under conditions created by unequal and unsustainable development, severe environmental degradation, an internal digital divide, Internet surveillance and censorship. Ongoing human rights challenges include building a functioning legal system that will protect fundamental due process rights, and addressing shortcomings in public health and inequities in social development. Although there is progress in these areas, the urgency of the ongoing human rights problems demands greater interventions.

Human rights problems such as these reflect a profound disconnect between the WSIS vision and the realities for the vast majority of the world's population. A more specific disconnect between the realities of China's connected online citizens and elites and the reality of poverty and exclusion from the benefits of development for the vast majority of China's citizens has serious consequences for both the future of ICT and human rights in China. ICTs will have a democratizing impact only within a vision of information society that places respect and promotion of human rights at its core. The use of ICTs to claim rights to public space, education, culture and life is only possible through the protection and strengthening of human rights as an interdependent and indivisible concept.

THEORY VS PRACTICE

As stated in the final WSIS Declaration of Principles, the WSIS was a call “to build a people-centered, inclusive and develop-

ment-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge.¹² Inevitably, the inherent structural limitations of international conferences such as the WSIS, the complexity and diversity of languages, cultures and interests involved, and the disparities of power, information and access of participants shaped the considerable challenges faced by the conveners and the participants.

Despite the formal inclusionary rhetoric and references to multiple stakeholders reflected in the Summit documents, the WSIS, like all international meetings, had to address enormous logistical, conceptual and political challenges for both organizers and participants. Disorganized technical logistics introduced communications problems between participants, which is rather ironic for a summit meeting invoking empowerment through technology. For example, improvements to the materials distribution and sound systems and to the set-up of some meeting rooms (which were inundated by the surrounding speakers) would have ensured better communication among participants.

In addition to the technical logistics, reports of censorship were also ironic in light of the summit's objectives. The Polimedia Lab, which was set up by the Geneva '03 collective as an open space for participatory communication, was shut down; thousands of copies of the Terra Viva summit newspaper produced by the independent news agency IPS, InfoSud and AWCIS disappeared from various displays in the Palexpo; other documents critical of the WSIS, media and corporations were confiscated and prevented from circulating inside the Palexpo; and a peaceful demonstration was broken up by riot police.¹³ This silencing of critical voices raised serious concerns in the context of a world summit intended to address such issues and promote freedom of expression.

As a two-phase summit, unlike other world summits, WSIS provides an opportunity for further intervention by participants, such as setting concrete benchmarks and monitoring the implementation of these benchmarks in the lead-up to Phase II in Tunis. Many actors, including government actors, eloquently expressed visions for the future information society. Whether and how these fine words will translate into

implemented commitments remains to be seen. The real test of whether such an enormous deployment of public global resources and limited NGO resources is justified is an assessment of the measurable impact on daily life and the flourishing of communities. This is where the final plan of action for WSIS II must be seriously strengthened.

TOWARDS TUNIS (OR NOT)

Tunis presents a question often asked regarding the selection of the host country for an international gathering—how do we ensure that the legitimacy of the process and the outcomes is not undercut by contradictions presented by human rights violations in the host country? In China's case these were questions raised regarding hosting of the Olympics in 2008 and the Women's Conference in 1995. Virtually no country can claim a human rights record so spotless as to confer automatic entitlement to hosting such conferences. However, degrees of culpability do matter, and a country's serious ongoing violations should not be ignored in favor of the glowing picture it presents in its bid for the tourism and foreign investment gained as a host country.

In particular, the preparatory process for Tunis needs to include monitoring of the inclusiveness concerns raised by NGOs in the first phase of WSIS, the politicized accreditation process, and lobbying by governments to remove human rights language in the final summit documents.¹⁴ China was among those government actors lobbying for specific language and concerns to be included in the final summit documents, and inevitably this lobbying had an impact on the final normative vision of the WSIS. For example, China consistently voiced its opposition to references to international labor standards and rights in the Draft Declaration of Principles. The absence of this language in the final text undercuts the implementation potential of a concrete plan of action that requires reference to and integration with existing and developing global standards and norms.

As articulated in the Declaration of Principles, the WSIS hope and vision is to use ICT to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empowerment of women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat

HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop global partners for development for the attainment of a more peaceful, just and prosperous world."¹⁵ While the articulation of a powerful normative vision is an important step, the move towards a truly "people-centered" information society requires an implementing structure, adequate and serious funding and an open and accountable monitoring process.

The Human Rights Caucus, supported by the civil society plenary, and the International Symposium on the Information Society, Human Dignity and Human Rights, has recommended the establishment of an Independent Commission on the Information Society and Human Rights composed of highly qualified experts with a broad geographical representation to monitor practices and policies on human rights and the information society.¹⁶ In the lead-up to phase two of the WSIS, the challenges facing NGOs, governments and other stakeholders likewise include developing a concrete monitoring and implementation framework and benchmarks. A number of international bodies are developing indicator tools that focus, for example, on governance, human development, poverty, press freedom and health. Building upon this foundation of existing indicators and developing effective institutional implementation and monitoring mechanisms would help move the process toward a reality beyond eloquent statements of principles and vision.

1. Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), Human Rights Summit (Vienna, 1993), Population Summit (Cairo, 1994), Social Summit (Copenhagen, 1995), Women's Summit (Beijing, 1995), Habitat II (Istanbul, 1996), World Food Summit (Rome, 1996), World Summit Against Racism (Durban, 2001), and World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002).
2. For more background and information on WSIS, see the Official ITU WSIS Site at: www.itu.int/wsis/; Civil Society Division at: www.geneva2003.org; Rights and Democracy at: www.ichrdd.ca; Human Rights Caucus at: www.iris.sgdg.org/actions/smsi/hr-wsis; the Heinrich Boll Foundation at: www.worldsummit2003.org; and Klein, H. 2003, "Understanding WSIS: An Institutional Analysis of the UN World Summit on the Information Society," retrieved from www.IP3.gatech.edu.

3. Although the number of civil society organizations in the PRC has increased over the past decades to an estimated 200,000, the emergence of a truly independent civil society faces legal, political, and institutional roadblocks. For an examination of some of these challenges and obstacles as well as some examples of relatively successful social movements, see Liang, S. "Walking the tightrope: Civil Society Organizations in China." *China Rights Forum*, The Rise of Civil Society, No.3, 2003. http://iso.hrichina.org/download_repository/2/Sharon%20Liang.pdf. See also China Development Brief. 2001. Directory of International NGOs. www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/dingo/index.asp.
4. "Maligned and Excluded in a Politicized Process: HRIC denied consultative status." *China Rights Forum*, Fall 1999.
5. HRIC conducted an informal survey reviewing China-related NGOs that initiated the WSIS application process and contacting the groups to confirm the cause as to why the NGOs were not accredited. We found 21 China-related NGOs (including HRIC) that had initiated the application process: 9 organizations self-identified themselves as Taiwan based, 4 as Hong Kong based, 7 as People's Republic of China (PRC) based, and 1 (HRIC) as United States based. Excluding the 4 organizations accredited under ECOSOC, only 4 organizations were accredited through the WSIS application process. The 13 organizations that were not on the Executive Secretariat's list for recommendation for accreditation included all 9 of the organizations self-identified as Taiwan-based and 3 organizations self-identified as PRC-based.
6. Hom, S. and J. Rockwitz. "Looking Back at Cancun and Forward to Hong Kong." *China Rights Forum: China's Spiritual Revival*. No.4, 2003. http://iso.hrichina.org/download_repository/2/rf8_irupdate4.2003.pdf.
7. Youth Caucus. www.takingitglobal.org.
8. World Forum on Communication Rights. www.communicationrights.org.
9. ICT4D www.ict4d.org.
10. December 12, 2003. Human Rights Caucus. www.iris.sgdg.org/actions/smsi/hr-wsis/list
11. CNNIC <http://www.cnnic.net/index.htm>
12. Declaration of Principles. December 12, 2003. http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0004!!MSW-E.doc.
13. WSIS? We Seize! www.geneva03.org/ and WSIS Heinrech Boll Foundation www.worldsummit2003.de/en/nav/14.htm.
14. "In Custody: People imprisoned for counter-revolutionary and state security crimes." *China Rights Forum: China and the Rule of*

Law. No. 2, 2003. http://iso.hrichina.org/download_repository/2/incustody2.2003.pdf.

15. Declaration of Principles. December 12, 2003. http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0004!!MSW-E.doc.
16. December 10, 2003. Human Rights Caucus. www.iris.sgdg.org/actions/smsi/hr-wsis/list.

World Movement for Democracy

Focus on China

BY MARIE HOLZMAN

The influence of China's political developments on its regional neighbors became a subject of particular interest at this international conference.

The Third Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy, held in Durban, South Africa from February 1–4, 2004, was attended by more than 600 participants from more than 100 different countries.¹ Partially sponsored and mainly organized by the National Endowment for Democracy, the focus of the Assembly was "Building Democracy for Peace, Development and Human Rights," and perhaps appropriately, China drew a substantial share of the discussion.

In spite of bad memories left by the tragic events that marred the UN Conference on Racism in Durban in 2001, this event was exceptionally successful; a peaceful and friendly atmosphere augmented by remarkably balmy weather encouraged dialogue, exchange and general good humor. Iraqis and Palestinians talked with Israelis, Muslims with Americans, Tibetans with Chinese, Burmese with French; any possible combination on earth was observed and everybody seemed to agree on the main subject: we were here together to make democracy work, everywhere.

HRIC board member Xiao Qiang, who was on the steering committee, was unable to attend because of travel complications. However, three other HRIC board members were present: Cheuk Kwan from Canada, Mab Huang from Taiwan, and myself from France. Other Chinese participants

included He Baogang of Australia's East Asian Institute, Zhou Fengsuo, a Tiananmen student leader now residing in Canada, and two participants from mainland China: Liu Junning, an independent scholar, and Wu Qing, a member of the National People's Congress active in the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women. Law Yuk-kai, head of Human Rights Monitor, and Han Dongfang, head of China Labour Bulletin, came from Hong Kong, and Enver Can, President of the East Turkestan National Congress, came from Germany. The Tibetan delegation was headed by Lodi Gyari, Special envoy of the Dalai Lama, with six other Tibetans attending from the Office of Tibet, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, Tibet Voice and Tibetan Youth Congress. Along with twelve members of various organizations from Taiwan (Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, Foundation on International and Cross-strait Studies, Academia Sinica, among others), the gathering of people directly concerned with China's democratic evolution was quite considerable.

This fairly heavy presence was particularly felt in some of the regional workshops focusing on Asia, with China emerging as the center of many discussions. For example, Howard Young from South Korea reported on his work with refugees fleeing from North Korea into China during a plenary session entitled "Promoting Democracy in Closed Societies." A lively dialogue between Thin Thin Aung of the Women's League of Burma and Annabelle Rodriguez of the Madrid-based association Encuentro on the growing sophistication with which regimes are using instruments of control over their people was also confirmed by Chinese participants.

The East Asia regional workshop centered its dialogue around China and the impact of Chinese political developments on neighboring countries or regions. Participants concluded that particular actions by local and overseas organizations with respect to China would facilitate a movement toward a more democratic East Asia. Recommended activities included the following:

- Better networking among democratic groups in East Asian countries;
- Organizing a forum on the theme of "the impact of Chinese democratization on the region";

- Encouraging the participation of more people from China in these discussions;
- Acknowledging and welcoming the desire of Taiwanese organizations to become more involved in the democratization of the region;
- Drawing from Mongolia's efforts to contribute to research on societies in transition using an "Asian Democracy Barometer";
- Organizing a special discussion on North Korea;
- Encouraging Chinese democracy activists to put more pressure on their government to ease the oppression of ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Other workshops concentrated on matters such as "Increasing youth participation in the political process," "Strategies to defend the independence of NGOs" and "Using traditional, alternative and new technology media to promote democracy." The specific experience of South Africa in "Decentralization and local empowerment" was also discussed at length.

The World Conference on Democracy ended appropriately with wine, tears and songs, but also with everybody taking home long lists of e-mail addresses and new contacts. Vo Van Ai and Penelope Faulkner of Forum Asia Democracy agreed to create an active network called Democracy in Asia, which can be visited on http://groups.yahoo.com/group/democracy_in_asia.

Perhaps it is fitting to end with a quote from the founding statement of the World Movement for Democracy: ". . . the time has come for democrats throughout the world to develop new forms of cooperation to promote the development of democracy. Such cooperation is needed to strengthen democracy where it is weak, to reform and invigorate democracy even where it is long-standing, and to bolster pro-democracy groups in countries that have not yet entered into a process of democratic transition."

1. The first Assembly took place in New Delhi, India in 1999, and the second in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 2000. The Third Assembly had originally been scheduled for March 2003, but was postponed due to the war in Iraq.

Olympics Briefs

BOCOG Head Confirmed as Mayor of Beijing

Wang Qishan, chairman of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG), was appointed mayor of Beijing on February 21. Wang became acting mayor, as well as taking over leadership of BOCOG, in April 2003 following the forced resignation of former mayor Meng Xuenong over the SARS crisis.

Born in 1948, Wang is the son-in-law of late vice premier Yao Yilin, and has gained a reputation as a trouble-shooter in China's banking and finance sector. He previously served as vice-governor of Guangdong Province and chairman of the Standing Committee of the Hainan Provincial People's Congress.

Speaking to reporters soon after a vote by the Beijing Municipal People's Congress confirmed his appointment, Wang stressed the need to solve Beijing's traffic headaches in the run-up to the Olympics. Wang told reporters, "I expect that many ordinary Beijingers will give up driving during the Games period." Wang outlined plans to build public parking lots and expressway links between Beijing's ring roads, as well as more than doubling light rail and subway networks.

At the same time, Wang admitted that urban redevelopment, including improved roadworks, had already forced many people from their long-time homes in old neighborhoods. "I absolutely do not deny that in some cases the demolition and removal has been conducted illegally," Wang said, while noting the relocation of some 1.5 million Beijing residents between 1991 and 2003.

Wang also acknowledged the need for more open communication between the government and the public regarding development and other matters. "I hope the media and residents will give us some leeway in communicating at the beginning of procedures to make government affairs transparent," Wang said. "This will help encourage our officials to speak more to the public and media."

New Olympic Watch Web Site

Olympic Watch, established in Prague in 2001 in response to the International Olympic Committee's decision to grant Beijing the organization of the 2008 Olympic Games, has begun operating a Web site to actively monitor developments in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics (<http://www.olympicwatch.org/>).

In recent weeks the Web site has posted a statement calling for greater freedom of speech and access to information in relation to the SARS crisis, and a letter written by Olympic Watch and five other human rights organizations to the Czech government calling for intervention in the case of Tibetan political prisoner Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. Olympic Watch has also issued statements calling for the release of He Depu, Zheng Enchong and other prisoners of conscience.

The organizing committee of Olympic Watch includes prominent political and cultural figures such as Jan Ruml, vice-president of the Senate of the Czech Republic, Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, British political scientist Timothy Garton Ash, Lord Weidenfeld, a member of Britain's House of Lords, Francois Loncle, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of France's National Assembly, and John Shattuck, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State.

300,000 Displaced for Games

Construction projects related to the 2008 Olympics have caused the eviction of an estimated 300,000 Beijing residents from their homes, Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (CHRE) reported in February.

CHRE's executive director, Scott Leckie, said figures from private and independent bodies, along with Beijing media sources, indicated that nearly 100,000 families had already lost their homes, and thousands more evictions were anticipated.

Although Leckie said Beijing's situation was not exceptionally bad in the context of similar evictions for the South Korea and Barcelona Games, CHRE is calling on the International Olympic Committee to stop the evictions.

CHRE is an NGO accredited with the United Nations.