

Yichang, China

November 4, 2000

Bonjour Victor. Ni hao.

China again... my ninth visit here. The Chinese people are so good-natured - so cordial, welcoming, friendly, helpful, (all the good adjectives) - that it is always a delight to be among them, even if there were not a "sight," a tourist attraction, to be seen.

This time there is a specific objective for my visit: the Three Gorges Dam. This is an enormous dam being built across the Yangtze River at San Dou Ping, about 200 miles west of Wuhan. When completed, about 2009, it will be 185 meters high, 2000 meters ~~high~~<sup>wide</sup>, and backed by a lake 600 kms long - the biggest dam in the world.

There is a great deal of argument and opposition to the building of the dam, world-wide. This is based upon the anguish of the very large number of people who will have to be relocated as the lake rises and covers their farmland. The opposition claims there are about 1.9 million of them; the government says the number is less. The other main point of opposition is the loss of important cultural treasures - temples, statues, archeological sites, and other such things. The

government is totally unmoved by such considerations in the face of the benefits that will be derived: hydro-electric power essential to China's industrialization, flood control, and controlled irrigation. The opposition is orchestrated for the most part by Green Peace oriented organizations. They bat zero with the Chinese government but they have managed to persuade some foreign governments and some lending institutions not to lend the Chinese any money for the project. Nevertheless, it is going ahead at flank speed, enormous works have already been achieved, and there is every prospect that it will be completed as and when planned.

And it is awesome. I visited the works today and every thing I saw and every thing I heard impressed me with the professionalism and practicality and deep dedication and confidence and optimism of the people who are making this thing go. I got around the site pretty well, and also had the exciting opportunity to talk with a few people well placed to give me some insights on the thing.

Wuhan, November 5.

Other than my visit to the dam project, this isn't a "deep" visit to China... sort of in and out in a couple of weeks. Started with a couple of days in Hong Kong. Oh, what a city!... sparkling, exciting, pulsing with energy... wonderfully

smart and sophisticated. I don't know how it eventually will be absorbed into China, but as of now, to a westerner, it appears not to have been changed at all.

Then up to Wuhan by train and from there, <sup>200 miles</sup> to Yichang by bus. Looking out your window, train or bus, as China flashes by... endlessly interesting. Then on up to the dam and a walk-around there as I reported above. Today I came back to Wuhan. I'm staying now in a 100-year old hotel, the Jiangnan, which in glory days passed lodged Chiang Kai Chek, Charles De Gaulle, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and others of similar fame.

After a couple of days here - every waking moment out on the streets of these Chinese cities is fascinating - I'll go back to Hong Kong for two more days and then home.

If you think any of this would be of interest to our classmates, please use it as you wish.

I'll look forward to seeing you in Annapolis next April.

Best regards,

Dick