

March 24 - 28 visit to Beijing and Shanghai by Congressman Curt Weldon and Da Hsuan Feng

Between January 21-31, 1997, Congressman Curt Weldon (7th District, State of Pennsylvania) led a United States Congressional delegation to Asia. Since Curt is the Chairman of the Congressional National Security Committee's Subcommittee on Military Research and Development, and the fact that one of the stops in Asia, Shanghai, was cancelled because of airplane mechanical trouble, the trip's primary issues were focused on the global issues of defense and the transfer of "Cold War" technologies for peaceful utilization such as environmental protection, for the United States as well as for the Asian regions and countries visited.

Between March 24-28, Curt and I visited to China. the highlight was for Weldon to deliver the Lincoln Lecture at the Fudan University in Shanghai. The primary issues to discuss were technology and economic ties between China and the United States, specifically between Shanghai and the Greater Philadelphia (as well as the four States region: Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania).

This was an exceedingly busy week between US and China. Not only were Curt and Al Gore in China, but also the arrival of Gingrich and his 15 congressional delegation arrived on Sunday, March 30th. In fact, during the week of March 31st, there will be some ten congressional delegations visiting China. Presumably, all these visits will pave way for the exchange meetings between the President of China Jiang Zemin later on in the fall and the visit to China by President Clinton in the spring of 1998.

Just as the last trip in January, this one was full of unexpected encounters with interesting outcomes!

Synopsis of the meeting with Vice Premier Zhu Rongji in Beijing

Perhaps the most exciting event in Beijing was the meeting we had with Vice Premier Zhu Rongji in the Great Hall of People. Vice Premier Zhu is universally credited in China as the architect and implementer of the exceedingly successful Chinese economic policy in recent years, especially since 1989. Having a nation as vast as China sustain a double-digit GNP growth rate and keeping inflation below 6% annually has made Zhu a renowned figure not only in China, but throughout the world. In the official Chinese ranking, Zhu is listed as Number 4, after Jiang Zimin, the President; Li Peng, the Premier and Qiao Shi, the Head of the Chinese People's Congress. In fact we heard quite a bit of speculation in Beijing and Shanghai that after the People's Congress meeting in early fall, Zhu may move up in ranking.

The meeting with Zhu, in my opinion, had several worthy significant features:

First: Our visit coincided with the exact same dates of Vice President Gore's visit to Beijing. Since we were in the same hotel as Gore, the entire hotel was filled with both Chinese and U.S. security agents. Hence it was not at all surprising to us that prior to our arrival, our host, the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, informed us that it would be quite unlikely that Curt will be meeting with any of the Chinese leaders. Therefore it was all the more exciting that not only was Curt able to meet a Chinese leader, but one that is currently enjoying success in his career at this crucial year for China.

Second: My personal impression was that this meeting went well beyond political courtesy. One way to gauge this was the fact that although the meeting was scheduled to be about half an hour, it actually lasted an hour and 10 minutes. Besides some standard protocol jokes and discussions, I was struck by how interested Premier Zhu was in establishing in-depth discussions with Curt on the inevitable issue of "campaign donations," on national defense, on the proposal of Gingrich-Weldon in establishing official liaison between the United States Congress and the Chinese People's Congress and, last but not least, on technology collaboration between China and the United States. In fact, towards the end, Vice Premier Zhu showed some reluctance in terminating the discussions with Curt, when his people asked him to "rush off" to another meeting, presumably the scheduled meeting with Gore and his entourage somewhere in the Great Hall of People.

During the meeting, Curt reiterated the interest of Gingrich and himself in establishing a Congress-to-Congress liaison between the United States and China. In fact, from the U.S. side, Curt told Zhu that the leading person will be The Honorable Doug Bereuter, Congressman from Nebraska who is the Chairperson of the House Committee on Asian Affairs. Since Curt is the point person in the Congress-to-Dumar liaison between U.S. and Russia, he would only have time to play a role as a subcommittee chair on technology in the US-China effort. Zhu said that after Curt brought this proposal to China in January, the Chinese leadership had many discussions about it and all agreed that this would be an exciting proposal which should be established as soon as possible. Curt said that the legislative contact between US and China would have the effect of mutually "empowering" both Congresses!

Curt also took the opportunity to bring to the table an extensive discussion about HUBS. Curt mentioned that prior to his visit in January, he and Jon Fox, Congressman from the 13th district of Pennsylvania, cosigned a letter to Shanghai's Mayor Xu Kuangdi, proposing that the Greater Philadelphia and Greater Shanghai regions establish a technological linkage. Curt also told Vice Premier Zhu that for the past ten months, the Weldon Working Group, co-chaired by myself and Bob Hollebeek of the University of Pennsylvania have been working hard in carrying out a very extensive regional study of a mega-scale information infrastructure for Greater Philadelphia, de facto wanting to transform our region as the first "smart region" of the nation. He also mentioned that there are now a large number of congressmen in our region who are strongly supporting it. From the preliminary indications from Mayor Xu, this proposal was quite well received in Shanghai. Curt further said that since he would be in Shanghai soon, he

would discuss this with the Shanghai municipal officials again. Zhu seemed genuinely impressed with this information and immediately told Curt that he was once the Mayor of Shanghai and expected that Shanghai would embrace this idea. He also said that if there was anything he could be of assistance, please inform him.

On three occasions, Zhu brought up the point that there is currently a proposed large scale project called "909." This is a \$600 million dollar project of setting up the first integrated circuit manufacturing line in Pudong, Shanghai in 1998. Four foreign companies are currently on the "short list": IBM, Rockwell, Siemens (from Germany) and Oki (from Japan). Two of these occasions were during the discussions with Curt and once was when the meeting was officially over, he came over to me and startled me by saying that it was good to meet me again (the last time I met Zhu was in New York in 1990 when he was the head of the Chinese Mayor delegation) and then said he thought that China's modernization depended on how rapidly China could move into the information technology era and this project would be a giant step in that direction.

Synopsis of the meeting with Shanghai's Vice Mayor Zhao Qizheng

Because we only have a day and a half in Shanghai, and the time completely coincided with Vice President Al Gore's visit to Shanghai, and the fact that the future Hong Kong Chief executive-designate the Honorable Tung Chee-Hwa also arrived from Hong Kong on the same day, Curt was unable to have a meeting with Mayor Xu. In his place, Mayor Xu had designated the Vice Mayor, the Honorable Zhao Qizheng to meet with Curt, immediately after we landed in Shanghai.

The meeting took place in the newly constructed impressive City Hall of Shanghai. Vice Mayor Zhao's portfolio included foreign affairs and the development of Pudong area. Interestingly, like me, he is a nuclear physicist. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that Pudong's reconstruction is the largest commercial, industrial and technological site in the world. In fact, according to Zhao, 70% of certain weight-class cranes in the world are currently deployed in Pudong region! (Curt and I saw with our own eyes the stunning construction of the Pudong area the next day when we were taken to the top of the TV tower in Pudong. We were told that over 2000 skyscrapers were being constructed in Shanghai and more than half, including the tallest building in Asia, will be in Pudong).

Vice Mayor Zhao also said that he heard the meeting between Curt and Vice Premier Zhu Rongji went exceedingly well. Zhu credited Curt in public and in private as not just a "politician," but a "great statesman." Apparently, the meeting between Zhu and Curt was broadcasted on national TV throughout China, which included Hong Kong.

Vice Mayor Zhao then launched into a technical discussion of how important it is to build the infrastructure for the entire Shanghai. This includes physical as well as information infrastructure. Vast amount of funds are being invested by the City Government in these two areas.

Seizing that opportunity, Curt again brought up the point about HUBS and the communication he and Congressman Fox had with Mayor Xu, Zhao's boss. Curt discussed in his usual eloquence the concept and the activities of HUBS. He further said to Zhao that the project is now seriously entering the funding stage, and it has a very large number congressmen supporting it (I asked him afterwards besides those that I know, who else could I in the future name them publicly. Curt said that they are Castle (DE), Andrews (NJ), Lobiando (NJ), Fattah (PA), Foglietta (PA), Murtha (PA), McDade (PA), Fox (PA), Peterson (PA)). The response of Zhao was most interesting, he immediately said that Shanghai would love to establish a similar system, and that he would like to see the HUBS - China centered in Pudong.

The discussion also drifted into project 909. Vice Mayor Zhao said that this is a very high priority project in China and said that any help Curt could render in this effort would be greatly appreciated by the entire Shanghai city.

To summarize, Vice Mayor Zhao requested Curt to write to Mayor Xu a more elaborate letter, stating what could be achieved concretely between Shanghai and the Greater Philadelphia area as soon as possible. He also said in conclusion he now understood why Vice Premier Zhu regarded Curt as a "statesman" and not just a "politician."

The Lincoln Lecture by Curt Weldon in Fudan University

The "grand finale" of this China trip was Curt delivery's of the Lincoln Lecture. The lecture was chaired by Academician Fu-Jia Yang, President of Fudan University and was held in the Institute of American Studies on campus. Since the entire text will be delivered to me soon for distribution, I will not discuss it in detail here.

There were some 400 students and faculty members attending the hour long lecture, followed by some 15 minutes of Q&A. It was interesting that no instant translation was necessary here. Judging by how sharp the questions were from the students, Curt's lecture was understood totally and appreciated by the audience.

Epilogue

On the last evening in Shanghai, Curt met Al Gore in the lobby of the hotel. Gore immediately mentioned that Vice Premier Zhu was most pleased with his discussion with Curt two days earlier. Curt then informed Gore the Project 909 and Gore promised to look into it.

I have always said that of all the Chinese cities I have visited, Hong Kong in my opinion is physically the most beautiful one. However, if there is one which I am most emotionally attached to, Shanghai has always ranked the highest. After all, my family on my mother side is all from this great city, and both my sister and brother were born there. Likewise, my wife and her family are all from Shanghai. I am the only unfortunate one

in the family who did not have the pleasure to be born in Shanghai. In addition, I have always found the language of Shanghai very personal and the people most familiar. Now I can honestly say that the new ingredient - being economically the most robust - is truly exciting as well!