

THE
CARTER CENTER



**The Mission of President Jimmy Carter to the People's Republic of China
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Executive Summary

At the invitation of Minister Zeng Jianhui, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the National People's Congress (NPC), former U.S. President Jimmy Carter led a delegation to the People's Republic of China from September 2-6, 2001. The delegation included Carter Center staff, members of the Board of Trustees, Congressman Joe Hoeffel of the House International Relations Committee, and Brian Duperreault, President and CEO of ACE Insurance LTD., a strong supporter of the China Village Elections Project." The mission of this visit is to promote The Carter Center's China Village Election Project, observe a village election in Zhouzhuang Town, Jiangsu Province, exchange ideas with top Chinese leaders on issues of common

concern, and prod them to apply the improved measures of villager committee elections to township elections in China that are due to be held at the end of 2001 through 2002.

In Beijing, President Carter opened an international symposium on villager self-government and rural social development in China so-sponsored by the Center and its cooperative partner, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), and met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, NPC Standing Committee Chairman Li Peng, Chairman Zeng Jianhui and MCA Minister Duoqi Cairang. In addition to grassroots democratization in China and the Center's effort in offering technical assistance in this endeavor, other subjects were also discussed extensively during these meetings, including Sino-American relations, the situation in the Korean Peninsula, religious freedom in China and the question of Tibet.

In Shanghai, the delegation met with local government and people's congress leaders and traveled to Quanwang Village in nearby Suzhou to observe a villager committee election.

This report is written by Jamie Horsley, a Florida-based consultant to the China Village Elections Project, with contribution from Charles Costello, director of the Democracy Project and Dr. Yawei Liu, associate director of the China Village Elections Project.

The International Symposium on Villager Self-government and the Rural Social Development in China, September 2-5, 2001

On the morning of September 3, MCA Minister Duoqi Cairang welcomed President Carter and his delegation to the Beijing Eastern Garden International Conference Center where the International Symposium on Villager Self-Government and Rural Social Development in China was held. Over 120 Chinese scholars and officials as well as researchers, academics and observers from the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Germany, Norway, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong attended the conference. Representatives from the Ford Foundation, which sponsored the conference, the European Union, the Asia Foundation, the United Nations Development Project, the British Council and other domestic and international NGOs also observed the conference (click [here](#) to see symposium presentation abstracts).

After a brief meeting during which the Minister estimated that about 80% of China's villages are conducting satisfactory Villager Committee (VC) elections, Minister Duoqi Cairang and President Carter gave opening addresses to the symposium. Minister Cairang introduced the history and significance of villager self-government, first noting that developing socialist democratic government has been a consistent goal of the Chinese Communist Party. Rural democracy, consisting of the establishment of VCs, promotion of villager self-government, and having villagers manage their own affairs in accordance with the law, is a major policy that combines the Party's historical experience with the needs of reform. VCs originated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The 1982 Constitution clarified their legal status and they had been established throughout China since the passage of a provisional organic law on villager committees

by the NPC in 1987. The trial law implemented from 1988 was revised and made permanent in November 1998 as the Organic Law on Villager Committees (the Organic Law). Within three years, 21 provinces, autonomous regions (ARs) and centrally administered municipalities (CAMs) had formulated new implementing measures and 23 provinces, ARs and CAMs had adopted VC election measures, pursuant to the VC Law.

As of now, the majority of provinces, ARs and CAMs have already conducted four rounds of VC elections. In the winter of 2001 and spring of 2002, 10 provinces will hold a new round. More than 3,000,000 VC leaders have been directly elected with a voting rate of 90% and above, transforming the former appointment system into an electoral system of better accountability, with single candidates replaced by multiple candidates, indirect elections replaced by direct elections. About 85% of villages have established Villager Assemblies or Villager Representative Assemblies, and over 90% have implemented open management of village affairs. Villager self-government revolves around implementation of the so-called “four democracies:” democratic elections, decision-making, management and supervision. Minister Cairang observed that the practice of villager self-government hinges on the leadership of the Party to support and guarantee that villagers realize their democratic rights in accordance with the law. At the same time, Party leadership style and methods must be improved, and Party members must participate in VC elections and work as equals. The legal system for villager self-government must be perfected to protect and guide the practice of self-government. Trust must be placed in the ability of the villagers to effectively carry out self-government, and their democratic consciousness must be developed through training, education and practice. At this stage, economic development is paramount, and villager self-government must promote economic development. In closing, Minister Cairang thanked President Carter and The Carter Center for their technical support of the grassroots democratization in China and cooperation in making the symposium possible.

President Carter next addressed the symposium. He noted that this was his seventh trip to China, the first having been in 1949 when he was a young Naval officer. The next visit was at the invitation of Deng Xiaoping in 1981. Deng had told President Carter about the household responsibility system introduced into the countryside, which laid the groundwork for the market reforms and free enterprise systems to flourish in China. Deng had also told him of plans to introduce free elections in the villages to complement the economic freedoms. Indeed, the 1982 Constitution for the first time authorized the election of self-governing villager committees in the countryside. President Carter also quoted Deng’s comment that political and economic reform complement each other, but of the two, political reform is the most important.

President Carter said he was honored to be invited by the MCA to provide technical advice on China’s village election program and reviewed The Carter Center efforts to help improve and enforce the VC Law, raise the democratic awareness of villagers and urban residents as well as to educate voters and train local officials, while developing principles of governance that might be implemented at higher levels. The project has

provided computers to Jilin, Fujian and Shaanxi for compiling statistics on villager committee elections, created websites in Chinese and English to provide information on the Organic Law and its implementation, provided training, and printed pamphlets. The project also made suggestions to the NPC on revisions to the trial Organic Law, many of which were implemented, and hosted delegation of Chinese officials who came to observe US elections and learn about our system.

Despite many improvements, particularly in the use of secret ballots and open nominations, President Carter noted that problems do remain. In some places, the Party continues to dominate the election process and village self-governance. There is still excessive use of proxy voting and roving ballot boxes, and no requirement in the national law on direct and open nominations by the villagers. President Carter also noted that it would be helpful to conduct a national survey to determine what percentage of villages is really implementing the law at this stage.

President Carter quoted NPC Standing Committee Chairman Li Peng who praised the revised 1998 VC Law and said that democracy starts at the grass-roots in China because the person of most direct concern to the farmer is the VC chair. He also quoted Premier Zhu Rongji who, in response to Western reporters' questions, has said that he personally is in favor of democratic election for all positions, including his own, but that the issue needs to be studied carefully, and two years later, in the year 2000, when asked when direct elections might be moved up above the village, Zhu replied, the sooner the better!

President Carter concluded his remarks by noting that he has never recommended the direct election of the President or the Premier and that the issue of moving direct elections up to higher levels is for the Chinese to decide themselves. However, he recommends and hopes that some sort of five to 10-year plan could be formulated to take the principles of VC elections to higher levels. He particularly likes to see improved electoral procedures be applied to the direct election of deputies to the township/town people's congress and the election of township/town magistrates.

Delegation member Congressman Joe Hoeffel (D-Penn), member of the House International Relations Committee, also spoke at the symposium, complimenting China's leaders and the NPC on the provisions of the 1998 Organic Law. However, he also recommended provision for vigorous campaigning to allow candidates to communicate with the people. He stressed that China must trust its people, quoting Abraham Lincoln (sic) as saying, "You can fool some people all the time, and all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." He concluded by observing that China is a great country, and that when the Chinese government takes to heart the principles of direct elections, the Chinese government will be as good and great as the Chinese people themselves.

MCA Vice Minister Li Xueju, who is in charge of village and urban resident committee elections, wrapped up the first session with a speech noting that each country is different and has different conditions and cultural backgrounds. China wants to study the

experience of all countries and welcomes opinions that are of value to China.

With 86 official delegates and 25 observers, the symposium ran for three days of plenary speeches and panel discussions on 10 topics such as the problems and issues involved with VC elections, the relationship between VCs and local Communist Party branches, the relationship between VCs and township/town governments, the relationship between villager self-government and economic development and rule of law, the social impact of villager self-government and the meaning of VC elections to China's upcoming political reform.

The symposium enabled the participants to conduct multi-facet exchanges between Chinese and foreign scholars, among foreign scholars themselves, as well as between government officials and the academia. During the symposium there were in-depth exchanges of research findings, research methodologies, and perspectives on villager self-government and rural social development. Panel sessions often flared up in passionate debate and arguments. For example, there are wide differences among scholars and officials on if China could move on to directly elect township/town magistrates. The overall feeling of the participants is that as far as China's democratization process is concerned, going too fast or too slow will inevitably cause problems. China needs a sure and steady path and peaceful international environment. There were also considerable discussions on the actual procedures of the VC election. While the popular haixuan method (individual nomination) has become a litmus test of the openness of the VC election, many scholars and officials questioned its utility in all circumstances. Haixuan, in their analysis, takes too much time and resources. The most heated debate at the conference focused on how to improve the relationship between the popularly elected villager committee and the embattled village Party branch. Many suggested that the Party is irrelevant in villager self-government and should retreat from it; others argued that forcing the Party to retreat from village affairs would cause irreparable damage to villager self-government. A few participants argued that the best solution to the impasse is to subject Party branch members to popular election. A majority of the participants believed that it is important to improve the CCP's leadership style and methods.

In its report to the Center, the MCA authorities indicated that the symposium was an eye-opening experience for the Chinese academic community and officials. Reports about practices in the developed nations, or regions like Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, proved to be quite refreshing and enriching. The Chinese participants have a common feeling that even though countries vary in actual conditions, they have much to learn from each other as far as promotion of democratization is concerned. For example, each country has its own experience and lessons to share with others concerning the widely adopted electoral measures such as the use of the secret ballot booth, setting up a sensible voter registration process, the prevention of vote-buying in elections and the issue of campaigning.

The organization of the symposium was open and democratic. Participants were able to express themselves freely at the symposium. Even though no consensus was reached on

most of the issues, people realized what was most important was the opportunity to come together and share. Many participants expressed their appreciation to the MCA and The Carter Center for having provided them with such a valuable forum for exchange of ideas. The only regret as conveyed to the organizers was that the symposium seemed too short. Many topics still await more detailed and in-depth discussions, and people hope to see more opportunity like this in the future.

At the suggestion of Dr. Yawei Liu of The Carter Center, all Western NGO representatives attending the symposium had a meeting in the evening of September 4. Each NGO talked about its project in China and shared their working experiences with their Chinese institutional partners. Much of the lively discussion focused on how European Union's local governance project is going to progress and if any cooperative arrangement could be set up among Western agencies that are working on rural political reform in China so that there will be an efficient way to allocate human and financial resources.

Meeting with Zeng Jianhui, Chairman of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee

The delegation met later that morning with the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee, followed by a lunch hosted by Committee Chairman Zeng Jianhui. Zeng said the Chinese people cherish special feelings for President Carter since, together with Deng Xiaoping, he opened a new epoch in Chinese-US relations. He thanked President Carter for the Center's cooperation and useful suggestions regarding VC elections, observing that reform of the rural economy and political reform are both important and that the VC elections and self-governance system is being applied by some 900 million farmers in 31 provinces, ARs and CAMs. Zeng said the major task of the NPC is to build rule of law, and that strengthening democracy and law is important for economic reform as well. China wants to be a country with rule of law and socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics. President Carter engaged Zeng in a discussion of implementation of the VC Law, praising advances made in Fujian province in terms of open nomination, enforcing the secret ballot and use of the secret ballot booths, etc. The NPC committee headed by Vice Chairman Zhang Chunsheng, the Legal Work Committee under the Standing Committee, as well as the Legal Committee, are working on revising the VC Law. In response to President Carter's suggestion to conduct a national survey, Zhang noted that probably 1/3 of the villages are strictly complying with the VC Law now, another third doing an average job, and the last third (usually in the underdeveloped Western region) doing less well. President Carter said the Center could help conduct the survey and perhaps the fact it was being done would provide an incentive for those villages not doing so well to do better.

Other issues of importance in US-China relations, including peace on the Korean peninsula, freedom of worship in China and Tibet, were also discussed at considerable length in an open and frank fashion. President Carter also raised the possibility of having the NPC send an intern to work for a few months in The Carter Center, as do young people from all over the world.

Meeting with Li Peng, Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee

Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee and former Premier Li Peng welcomed the delegation at the Great Hall of the People in the afternoon of September 3. Also present were Zeng Jianhui, former Ambassador to the US and Foreign Affairs Vice-Minister Li Zhaoxing and Zhang Kunsheng, Counselor to the Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs. Li reported that the Standing Committee, which meets every two months, had recently conducted an inspection of several provinces on progress and problems since the permanent adoption of the VC Law in November 1998 and had already published their report (click [here](#) to see the NPC law enforcement inspection report). Major findings included the importance of villager self-government, open administration of villager affairs and the role of the village Party branch. Li Peng felt that the study showed the issue of major concern to the farmers was not conflict with the township but rather who was the VC chair. The people want candidates who are fair and selfless, as well as capable of helping to raise the economic and living standards of the villages. Li Peng also mentioned that most of the villagers do not know who their township/town magistrates are and this shows the large gap between the people and the government. Members of the delegation were disappointed that Li Peng did not address the issue of political reform. He spent most of his time answering talking about how big and poor China is and how heavy a burden the Chinese leadership is carrying in providing education, food, housing and other services to the large Chinese population and answering President Carter's queries on the reform of the state-owned enterprises and religious freedom.

In the evening, President Carter attended a dinner hosted by the MCA Minister Duoji Cairang and his wife, and officials from MCA, at the Grand Hotel. They talked again about the Center's Village Elections Project and the cooperation between the Center and the MCA.

On Tuesday, September 4, President Carter and the delegation had a private breakfast at Diaoyutai State Guest House with corporate supporters and representatives of the American business community in Beijing. Representatives of two corporate donors, the AT&T and the Chase-Manhattan Bank, were present. The new U.S. Ambassador to China, Clark T. Randt, Jr., hosted a luncheon for the delegation, after which President Carter gave a press conference with representatives of the Western press. President Carter The delegation then flew to Shanghai, where they were greeted and hosted to an evening banquet by Shanghai People's Congress Vice Chair Sha Lin (Chairwoman Chen Tiedi was out of town), Shanghai Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau Director and Party Secretary Shi Derong and members of the Shanghai people's government.

VC Election Observation in Quanwang Village, Zhouzhuang Town, Kunshan City, Suzhou Municipality, Jiangsu Province, September 5, 2001

Accompanied by the US Consul General in Shanghai, Henry Levine, President of the National Committee for US-China Relations, John Holden, Northeastern University professor Suzanne Ogden and a large group of press, the delegation traveled by car and

van one hour to Quanwang Village, in Zhouzhuang Town, Kunshan City, Suzhou Municipality in Jiangsu Province. The Carter delegation was met at Quanwang by Ms Bai Suning, Vice Chairman of the Jiangsu People's Congress, Gu Hanping, Director of the Jiangsu Civil Affairs Bureau and other officials.

Jiangsu Province has 1,372 townships and a total of 23,175 villager committees. VC elections have been carried out province-wide since 1988. Although Quanwang' first VC election was held in 1984, the Quanwang election we observed was handled pursuant to the general stipulations of the revised Organic Law on Villager Committees adopted by the NPC in 1998, the Jiangsu Province Measures to Implement the Organic Law on Villager Committees adopted in July 2001 and the Jiangsu Province Measures for the Election of Villager Committees adopted one year earlier in August 2000 (Jiangsu Election Measures is available at www.cartercenter.org/china.html). Most villages have gone through five rounds of VC elections, and villages in model Kunshan City have gone through six rounds. Jiangsu officials report that all villages have organized villager assemblies or villager representative assemblies comprised of 1,540,000 villager representatives to make major decisions and supervise the VC activities. Within 10 days after the new VCs are elected, 98% of the VCs formulate a VC Work Plan and VC Three-Year Goals, while all villages have formulated governing Village Compact and 70% have adopted Villager Self-Government Charters according to officials.

With 1,129 residents and about 925 registered voters, Quanwang is an urbanized village located in northern Zhouzhuang Town, better known as the Venice in the Orient because of its network of rivers and canals. Quanwang's 308 families are organized into 12 Villager Small Groups. The economy relies mainly on industries, trade and agriculture, with two joint ventures, and increasingly looks to tourism as a source of income. Total output of the village in 2000 came to 12,557,000 yuan (\$1.53 million) or with 5,735 yuan (\$700) per capita income, while total collective income was 1,529,000 yuan (\$186,463) out of which there was a fixed asset of 4,780,000 yuan (\$582,926). The Quanwang VC over the past few years has appropriated 1 million yuan (\$121,951) to plant trees, pave roads and re-route the river. Quanwang Village has received various awards from Kunshan City for its economic and socialist cultural and ideological progress. In 2000, the MCA named it a Model Villager Autonomy Village, and Jiangsu Province proclaimed it the Most Sanitary Village in the Province.

In 1983, Quanwang was one of the earliest villages to organize a VC, based on provisions of the 1982 Constitution but before any provincial or national legislation on VCs was in place. Six rounds of VC elections have been held since then, with the last being in 1998. At that time, the villagers elected a VC chair, one Vice Chair and three Members. In the seventh election, the Quanwang Villagers Representative Assembly (VRA) determined that the VC should consist of a Chair and four Members, and that the position of Vice Chair was not necessary. After the VC election, the villagers were to elect 25 new VRA representatives.

There are 36 Communist Party members in the village. The Party branch secretary was

selected to serve as chair of the five-member Villager Election Committee. We were told that he had been elected to his Party position using a “two-ballot” system in which a first ballot, an “opinion poll”, among all voters was taken, followed by a vote by Party members only on those candidates who received more than 50 percent of the popular endorsement vote from the first ballot.

The VC election was held in the courtyard outside a silk factory and tourist store. The entire election process, from candidate introductions and speeches, to vote-counting and swearing-in of the winners, took about three hours. This was the second round of VC elections held pursuant to the provisions of the Jiangsu Election Measures, which introduced open nominations and eliminated roving ballot boxes, while clarifying other procedures.

The primary, which was the first that Quanwang had held, was held on August 30 and consisted of an open, direct nomination process during a meeting of all voters (with 801 present) that resulted in 67 candidates for the position of VC chair and 164 candidates for VC members. The nomination results were published by a notice posted in the courtyard on August 31. The top vote-getters were then named the official candidates: two candidates for the position of the chair and five candidates for the four member positions. (A provincial civil affairs official told us that Quanwang decided not to have a vice chair position, both because it wasn't necessary and to save on expenses.)

The candidates for VC chair were Zhao Xiaomao and Wang Jueping, both males and Party members. Zhao Xiaomao was the incumbent, having served for five terms since 1987 as the VC chair. Born in 1955, he was 47 years old and a polytechnic school graduate. He worked as a farmer from 1971 to 1974 and served in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) artillery force in Xuzhou, Jiangsu from 1974 to 1980, after which he was selected to be the director of village public safety committee. He was the militia battalion commander in Quanwang from 1981 to 1987 (most of the villages in China still have a militia unit and each year members of the militia receive a few days of military readiness training and fees are collected to support this activity that originated in the 1960s and 1970s when China was preparing to fight with both the Americans and the Soviets). In 1991, he received an associate degree in public administration from the Suzhou Television Polytechnic College. He won various awards in 1998, 1999 and 2001 respectively, including best CCP Party member, excellence in family planning and conflict mediation.

Challenger Wang Jueping was 38 years old with senior high education. He was a farmer from 1980 to 1988 and worked in a seafood farm from 1989 to 1991. He was a salesman for the Quanwang Leather Goods Factory from 1992 to 1993 and was its manager from 1994. He also worked at the Quanwang Sanxing Leather Co. Ltd. in 1994. He served as Deputy General Manager of the Sanrong Leather Co. Ltd. in Quanwang from 1996 to 2000. He started his own business in 2001. A younger resident interviewed during the election said she had voted for Wang since he was younger and the village needed some change. Older residents reported that they liked the fact that Zhao had years of experience as a village leader and the VC chair as well as his higher level of education.

In the nomination process, Zhao received 267 votes to Wang's 72, with the third runner-up getting 67 votes. Wang did much better in the final vote, receiving 283 votes (33% of the total ballots cast) to Zhao's winning 559 votes (65%), with 16 additional votes distributed among nine write-in candidates.

The candidates for the four VC Member positions included one woman, Gu Xingying. A Party member with senior high school education, she received the most votes (319) in the nomination process, and the third most in the final election. After several years as a farmer, she became director of the women's association in the village and was first elected to the VC in the sixth round of VC elections. Zhu Lirong, 28-year old Party member and middle school graduate, worked in a shirt factory after graduation in 1989, moving to the Quanwang Sanxing Leather Co. Ltd. from 1992 to 1993 and then serving in the PLA Zhejiang Military Police from 1994 to 1996. In 1997, he became deputy director for the village public safety committee. He was first elected to the Quanwang VC as its accountant in the sixth round of elections in 1998, and received the most votes for VC member.

Shen Donglin, a 34-year-old Party member and middle school graduate, was a farmer from 1983 to 1989, village technician from 1989 to 1991, village militia battalion commander from 1992 to 1997, and elected VC Vice Chair in 1998. Zhu Lixin, a 30-year old Party member and middle school graduate, first worked for two years in a local machine factory, and then served in the PLA paratrooper force in Wuhan, Hubei Province from 1991 to 1994. He has worked at the Sanxing Leather Co. Ltd. since 1995, serving concurrently as the village Chinese Communist Youth League branch secretary and a member of the VC since 1998 (Communist Youth League is a junior partner to the Communist Party and has parallel organization where the Party has local cells.). He received the second most votes for VC Member.

The only challenger for a VC member position, Zhu Quanlin was a former VC member and a deputy to the Ninth Township People's Congress of Kunshan City. A 36-year old middle school graduate, he farmed from 1981 to 1985, worked in a leather goods factory from 1985 to 87 and served as Communist Youth League branch secretary from 1988 to 1990, as well as a VC member. He worked in the Kunshan Leather Co. Ltd. as head of the supply department and opened his own business in 1995. He received an award from Kunshan City for his contribution to the 2000 census. He was not a Party member, and did not get elected.

The delegation arrived at Quanwang shortly after 8:30 am. Villagers had gathered as early as 7:30 am to be counted. There were 805 voters present at the election meeting site with 55 voting by proxy, totaling 860 out of 925 (93% of the registered voters). The number was tabulated prior to our arrival. The villagers were all gathered in the courtyard, sitting on stools organized in their 12 Villager Small Groups (VSGs). The five-member Villager Election Committee (VEC), chaired by the Party Branch Secretary (and including one woman), sat behind a table on a raised dais. Another dais covered by an awning against the strong sun (and later light rain) was provided for the delegation and various officials from provincial municipal and city governments and people's

congresses. Five scribe stations (to help illiterate voters) and 15 voting stations, consisting of partitioned cubicles with high sides containing a desk and chair, were set up along two sides of the courtyard.

The general election meeting opened with the playing of the PRC national anthem. The VEC chairman then gave an introductory speech, explaining the election procedures and introducing President Carter and the delegation. The MCA told us that the villagers had not been told in advance that the delegation (and all the media) would be present, until they arrived to vote. They clearly had been instructed to remain seated when not standing up to vote, since in other villages, the villagers would tend to disperse after voting and return from time to time to watch the ballot counting and swearing in ceremony, rather than returning to their seats to patiently wait through the entire process. Election workers had also clearly been told to expedite the process to accommodate President Carter's schedule.

The candidates were then introduced, speaking in the Jiangsu dialect. Incumbent VC Chair Zhao Xiaomao spoke first. He was a prosperous-looking man, with a cellphone attached to his belt. He spoke at some length of his past record and achievements, as well as future plans for the village. Challenger Wang Jueping spoke briefly, basically saying that everyone knew him (through his shop) and that he would work hard and do a good job if elected. Other candidates also gave short remarks, with the sole female candidate talking about her work to improve care for the elderly. The speeches on election day represented the only formal campaigning for the election although we have read from the Chinese media and official work reports about a large variety of informal and even illegal campaigning in villages across the country before the election, including lobbying relatives and clan members, offering cash, cigarettes, meals or other material incentives for votes, and making empty promises.

The VEC chair asked for questions. One elderly man, Wu Rongchun, stood up and asked why Zhao was promising to install 16 more toilets when they were not even replacing the ones. He was also wondering if the senior citizen activity center and the kindergarten that had been razed to make way for new development could be rebuilt. His rather emotional remarks prompted spontaneous applause from the assembled villagers. When questioned later, Wu insisted that he had not been requested to ask the question. He was an old Party cadre and knew these were issues of concern to the villagers and felt it was his duty to raise them. His view of Zhao's answer, namely that replacement of the facilities that had been destroyed during construction was the responsibility of the local planning commission and not the VC, was inadequate and that if the situation did not get resolved, he would raise it again.

As there were no further questions, the election workers were called to the front of the assembly and the villagers were asked to approve their appointment. They then dispersed to handle and monitor the ballot distribution process, wherein voters had to show their identification cards and were then given two ballots: a pink one with the names of the two candidates for VC chair, and a yellow one with the five names of the candidates for VC member. On each ballot there was one space left blank for write-in

candidates. Voters were instructed to mark “O” above the names of candidates they wanted to vote for and “X” above the names of those they did not want to vote for.

The process went smoothly, with voters lining up in their VSGs to obtain their ballots from one of two tables set up at either side of the courtyard. After the ballot distribution process, there were 75 excess ballots, which were torn up and destroyed. Although voters were rushing to get through the process, election monitors stood around the voting stations to ensure that only one person at a time was in the booth filling out a ballot. Voters took their completed ballots and put them in sealed ballot boxes set up in front of the assembly. When questioned, a younger voter said she had voted for Wang Jueping for VC chair since he was younger, had business experience, and it would be good to have a change, whereas an older voter said he had voted for incumbent Zhao in deference to his age and valuable experience in the position of VC chair.

President Carter gave an open press conference at one side of the courtyard during the voting process. During his remarks, he observed that experience around the world shows that direct elections help promote a sense of dignity and self-worth among citizens, as well as serve to reduce dissent by acting as a kind of safety valve for dissatisfied citizens, and to dramatically reduce corruption, since officials know they have to answer to the people in order to get re-elected. President Carter defended the election process as meaningful, citing the open nomination process, the secret ballot, and the voters’ active interest. He supported direct elections at township levels, but recognized that change would not come quickly or easily.

After the voting was finished, election workers opened the sealed ballot boxes and dumped the ballots on the two tables formerly used to distribute ballots. They first separated the yellow and pink ballots into piles, checking simultaneously for any totally invalid ballots, of which there were only two. Four blackboards to record VC Member votes, and two to tabulate VC Chair votes had been set up in front of and facing the assembly. The ballots were distributed among groups of ballot callers, counters and monitors to tabulate. Each vote was recorded on the blackboard by a ballot counter as the ballot caller called it out. It started raining during the count, necessitating erection of several large umbrellas to protect the blackboards. The voters sat patiently throughout the process and the alternating rain and hot sun, raising umbrellas or putting towels over their heads. When each bunch of ballots was recorded, the final results were tallied on the blackboards and ultimately transferred to another blackboard where the final count for each candidate and names and number of votes for each write-in candidate were set forth. The results were as follows:

VC Chair:

Zhao Xiaomao 559 (65%)

Wang Jueping 283 (33%)

9 Write-in Candidates 16 (2%)

Total 858

VC Members

Gu Xingping 651
Zhu Lirong 707
Shen Donglin 635
Zhu Lixin 669
Zhu Quanlin 362

The results were announced by the VEC Chairman. Since one candidate for chair and four candidates for VC Member had received more than the requisite 50% vote threshold, the new VC Committee was formed and the winners were given red certificates of election. VC Chair Zhao and female VC Member Gu each made short remarks promising to do a good job. President Carter then congratulated the winners and joined them for a group picture to commemorate the event.

Following the election, President Carter gave interviews to CCTV and CNN. He praised the Quanwang election as having been conducted in accordance with good procedures, with an open nomination process out of which the final candidates were determined, secret ballot, open count and immediate announcement of the results, as well as an over 90% turnout. On suggestions to improve the process, President Carter reiterated the importance of universally having a truly open and direct nomination process not dominated by the Party and a truly secret ballot, and recommended that the MCA conduct a national survey to see how villages throughout the nation were really doing in implementing the VC Law. While the Villager Committee elections are important in and of themselves in promoting democracy in the countryside, they are also important for further political reform. If they are seen as successful, the next logical step is to move direct elections to the township level for experimentation. If the VC elections are seen as a failure, then further political reform would be difficult.

Comments and Recommendations with Respect to the Quanwang VC Election

Comments and Recommendations with Respect to the Quanwang VC Election

1. The Jiangsu Province Election Measures are very qualitatively strong, especially in setting forth a detailed direct nomination procedure and apparently eliminating the roving ballot box, replacing it with proxy ballots.
2. The VC election witnessed in Quanwang Village appeared to follow closely the Jiangsu Election Measures, of which we had a printed copy that was translated by the Center. While the procedures seemed to be a bit accelerated (shortened time for speeches and questions, some confusion in separating and checking the ballots after the ballot boxes were opened, etc.), presumably due to the presence of President Carter and his delegation, nonetheless, they are sound and contain the essential elements of an open and competitive election.
3. The group had three suggestions on ballot design.
 - a. To increase interaction between the candidates and voters, we recommend face-to-

face meetings with candidates before the election under the supervision of the VEC.

b. To avoid confusion and expedite voting, we recommend elimination of the practice of asking voters to vote AGAINST candidates they do not want to elect, as well as those they do. This will also avoid the possibility of having to invalidate ballots where voters did not in fact entirely fill out the ballot with votes for and against, or where they used the wrong mark to indicate a vote cast in favor of a candidate.

c. There should be sufficient blank spaces on the ballot to write-in as many candidate names as there are positions to be filled. In Quanwang, there was only one blank space on the VC Member ballot for a write-in candidate, although there were four VC Member positions to be voted on.

The delegation proceeded to a luncheon hosted by Mr. Chen Huanyou, Chairman of the Jiangsu People's Congress (JPC) and a former Governor of Jiangsu province, JPC Vice Chair Ms. Bai, Huang Jundu, Chairman of the Suzhou People's Congress and other Chinese officials, and were taken on a walking tour of scenic Zhouzhuang and gondola ride on the canals before returning to Shanghai. At a dinner hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce that evening, President Carter addressed a gathering of the American business community in Shanghai about The Carter Center activities and the China Village Election Project. He stressed the importance of constructive US-China relations.

Meeting with President Jiang Zemin

The delegation returned to Beijing on September 6 for a meeting with Chinese President and Party Secretary General Jiang Zemin, who had just returned from North Korea. President Carter told Jiang that one of his most significant legacies was to normalize the relationship between the United States and China, two of the most important nations in the world. He wondered what Jiang would regard as his most memorable legacy. He pressed his point about the popularity and acceptance, as well as the value, of the villager committee elections in China and their role in reducing violent dissent and corruption. He asked about the possibility of moving direct elections for local government officials up to the township level, where the residents already vote directly for their people's congress deputies. Moreover, the village election program has been well received by American public opinion and the Congress.

Jiang spent quite some time defining the legacies of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in order to highlight his own legacy. He said that Mao founded the People's Republic of China but made a tragic mistake of advocating class struggle in China. He qualified Deng's legacy as correcting Mao's mistake, which has resulted in emancipating the Chinese productivity, developing China's economy, and raising the living standards of the Chinese people. Jiang declared that his legacy is the "three representations" (namely, the Chinese Communist Party shall represent the majority of the Chinese people, the most advanced productive forces and the most modern culture). His legacy was clearly delineated in his July 1, 2001 speech that has already been translated in all

major foreign languages. He personally supervised the English translation of his speech. He acknowledged that there has been criticism of the speech from both the right and the left, but he was convinced that the majority of the Chinese Communist Party members, the PLA and the Chinese people are on his side.

On the issue of democratization, Jiang repeated almost verbatim what he had told the New York Times senior editorial staff in Beidaihe Resort in the summer, i.e. a Western kind of democracy will drive China to the “luan”--chaos, leading to anarchy and famine. He said that perhaps there was too much democracy in the United States. He stated that Chinese leaders uphold the principle of democracy and are making constant progress toward democracy and rule of law, while worrying about feeding and clothing 1.26 billion people. He noted that each country has its own history and culture. While the Carter Center has done many commendable things, every country cannot embrace just one political system or one electoral procedure. He seemed to believe that China was already carrying out direct election of township/town magistrates, indicating a lack of attention to this important issue.

Presidents Carter and Jiang also discussed North Korea, religious freedom and Tibet questions before concluding the friendly and open one-hour twenty-minute meeting.

Following that meeting, part of the delegation accompanied President and Mrs. Carter to Hong Kong and Mongolia. Charles Costello and Yawei Liu held productive meetings the following day with the MCA and NPC counterparts and cooperating scholars to discuss implementation plans and new initiatives. The Carter is exploring the possibility of getting involved in improving the quality of the direct election of township/town people's congress deputies and advising on experiments in electing township/town magistrates.

Conclusion

President Carter's most recent visit to China is important and of great significance. It has accomplished several goals as follows:

1. Using his prominent stature and reputation and the Center's long-term work in China, President Carter raised the issue of applying the improved electoral procedures in village elections to the elections at the next higher level, the direct election of township/town people's congress deputies and the indirect election of township/town magistrates directly to the Chinese leaders. The warm reception of the visit by President Carter and his subsequent meetings with President Jiang Zemin, Chairman Li Peng and other NPC leaders have, to a certain extent, demonstrated Chinese government's willingness to receive international support and to improve its governance.
2. President Carter opened the international symposium on villager self-government and the rural social development in China. This conference is unprecedented in terms of the level of support from the Center's partner the MCA, the number and quality of Chinese

scholarly presentations delivered at the symposium, the rare scale of its international representation, the large presence of representatives from international agencies that work in China on rural governance projects, the significant participation by Chinese officials from all levels, the unanimity of their belief in the inevitability of democratization in China and their determination to make it happen, and the heatedness of their debate on how to make this happen.

3. President Carter's visit once again attracted the attention of both the Chinese and particularly the Western media. The coverage of the conference in Beijing and especially the coverage of the observation of the village election in Quanwang Village were very impressive, making people pay more attention to this significant change in China's countryside and assess its impact.

4. This visit has further placed the Center's work in China in the limelight and provided a forum for all Western agencies to come together and share their valuable experiences and sophisticated work plans in China. At the same time, this visit has further cemented the cooperative relationship between the MCA and The Carter Center and increased the exchange of views between the Center and the NPC. With the MCA in charge of villager self-government and direct village elections, and the NPC supervising all elections above the village in China, the Center is in a very good position to work with Chinese election officials and provide technical support for the improvement of the quality of elections in China.