

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.

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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

provided computers to Jilin, Fujian and Shaanxi for compiling statistics on villager committee elections, created websites in Chinese an

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

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

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 Co

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 de

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

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 Kun

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

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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.