

Cultivating a Dialogue of Civilizations

Schiller Institute Youth Delegation Visits China

From September 18 to 28, 2023 a delegation of 15 mostly young representatives of the Schiller Institute in the United States and Canada visited China. The delegation visited places in and around Beijing and Chengdu, participating in many presentations, group dialogues, and tours of various notable sights throughout the trip. The response was overwhelming, both from the delegates, as well as from their hosts who

having left the country before, I was astonished and amazed by nearly every single moment of our trip to China, from the warm reception we received, to all of the wonderful cultural and historical sites we experienced and the dialogues we engaged in. However, likely due to my background in rural America, I was deeply moved by one particular activity during our trip, which was our tour of Siduhe Village in Huairou



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A Schiller Institute delegation of 15 youth visited China Sept. 18-23, 2023. Here they pose with their Chinese guide in front of the Chengdu University Library.

were thrilled to meet and interact with members of the Schiller Institute. On Friday, October 6, a number of the delegates gave short presentations to an event in New York City, discussing some of the highlights and personal reflections from their trip. What follows is an edited compilation of six of those presentations.

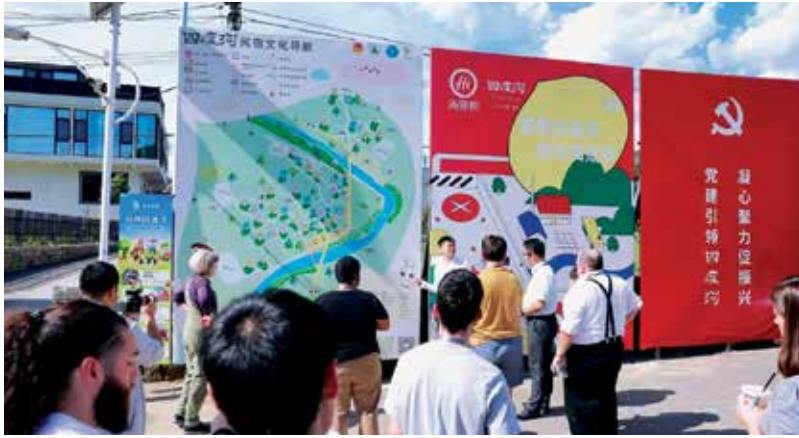
Rural Revitalization and an All-Nation Modernization

by Simon Miller

My name is Simon Miller. I was born in Longmont, Colorado, but moved to a small town in rural Missouri, called Camdenton, where I grew up from age 9. Never

District, Beijing. I want to share that experience with everyone I can, so I plan to discuss three main topics; these are, namely, agriculture, modernization, and the community. Without further ado, let's begin.

On the morning of September 20, which was our third full day in China, we took the bus for over an hour outside of the city, to Huairou District, Beijing. Immediately upon arrival in Siduhe, in addition to the gorgeous nature surrounding us, we were greeted by our group of hosts, among whom were two young college students living in Siduhe as part of the project of Rural Revitalization. They led us to a lovely Airbnb where we ate a delicious lunch consisting of, among other things, Chestnut Pork. This gave us a sense for the end product of the village's main agricultural



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A Chinese guide explains the Rural Revitalization program for the village of Siduhe to the Schiller Institute delegation.

product: chestnuts! After the meal, we began our tour of the village. The agriculture surrounded us, from the chestnut trees sprawling around the entire village, to the small plots of land dedicated to cultivating other vegetables that could be found beside many of the homes in the village. Our young hosts described how they had helped innovate the agricultural process, by improving the packaging, marketing, and distribution. They informed us that modernizing the sale of chestnuts was a key mission for them.

Speaking of modernization, I would be remiss not to mention the displays of gorgeous architecture dotting Siduhe Village. Throughout the village there stood several sleek and modern buildings with architecture akin to some of the most affluent neighborhoods in the United States. In the rural U.S., you could only find buildings such as these far from the towns or standing in a specific area in contrast to the rest of the town. Yet here, due to the project of Rural Revitalization, these buildings were becoming increasingly common in a tiny village of less than 400 people, interspersed between the older and more traditional architecture of the surrounding village. It was a powerful sight to see all of this effort in modernizing both the agricultural process and the architecture of such a tight-knit, rural community.

And community there was! At several points during our tour, we encountered ordinary people going about their daily business, and we experienced the cohesive nature of this rural community. It is a common stereotype

of rural America that the communities are closer there than in the larger cities, and while that stereotype may still be accurate to some degree, we all know that these communities are being left behind in favor of the bustling “city life.”

Our encounters with ordinary people included an older woman who was wheeling heavy cargo down a moderately bumpy hill, with her wheelbarrow threatening to turn over and dump her cargo onto the ground. Immediately upon seeing this, one of our young hosts approached the woman, tapped her arm, and offered to wheel the wheelbarrow to the bottom of the hill for her, which he

proceeded to do with haste.

Another encounter was with an elderly man who approached our delegation as we were crossing a small bridge to the village library. He began speaking with a gigantic smile on his face, making his way to the front of our group where he exclaimed that our hosts (particularly the gentleman translating for us) were some of the most popular people in the village, and that they were loved for being so helpful and



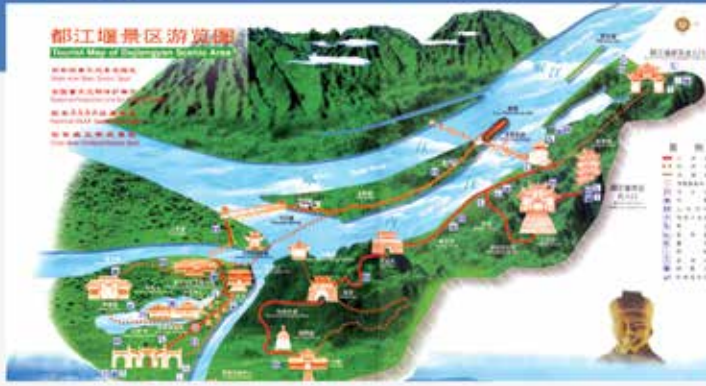
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The delegation met many ordinary Chinese people. This elderly man told them: “I am happy to see so many people here listening to what they [the volunteers working to improve the village] have to say.”

caring. He said, “I am happy to see so many people here listening to what they have to say!” It was an emotional moment for me to witness the level of comradery and love between these villagers and the volunteers working to improve the village. This was deeply moving.

All of this, from the improvement of agriculture, to

Dujiangyan Irrigation System, ~256 B.C.



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Expansion of the ancient Dujiangyan Irrigation System, and the introduction of modern production, processing, and distribution of foodstuffs has greatly improved living standards for the people in the Chengdu Plain.

the modernization of living spaces, down to the helping hand extended to ordinary people, was being poured into a small village on the outskirts of civilization. All of this effort was going toward the improvement of a positive and closely-tied community of normal working people. This is what impassioned me to share this experience with everyone that I can. Because so many rural towns in the U.S. were built on this sense of closeness, on love for one's neighbor, and because increasingly these communities are being left in the dustbin to wither away. But here, across the world, in an even smaller community, there were energetic people of all ages who worked each and every day to maintain and improve that community life. As sure as I am that I love my community in rural Missouri, I am equally sure that we can work together to do the same thing here in the country I love.

China, Like America, Loves Big Water Projects

by Michelle Erin

My name is Michelle. I'm going to talk about our visit to the Dujiangyan Irrigation System. But first I want to explain something about myself, and perhaps about many other Americans.

The first large water project in the United States was designed by Alexander Hamilton and was built right across the river from here, in Paterson New Jersey, in 1789. Other substantial water infrastructure projects include the Erie Canal, built between 1817 and 1825, and the first major water project to bring

water to New York City—the Old Croton Aqueduct—built between 1837 and 1842. So for people in the United States, where *these* projects are considered “ancient history,” it's quite something to learn that the Dujiangyan Irrigation System was built in 256 B.C.! It's a big difference. And when I've told other Americans about the Dujiangyan project being built in 256 B.C., the most common response I get is “Wow!”

And this project was actually the thing that I was most interested to visit in China, because I've seen many of the water projects in the United States.

So on our visit, first we had a wonderful presentation by an expert named Wang Guoping, who told us about the project. He told us about the outlook of the people at the time of the building, that there is a harmony between man and nature, and that the region is the origin of Taoism—which I can't claim to know much about. He referenced Chinese poetry as well.



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Wang Guoping, an expert on the Dujiangyan Irrigation System, gave the history of the project, going back to 256 B.C., the beginning of what was to become the Chin Dynasty.

The project was built right at the beginning of what was to become the Chin Dynasty consolidation of the future nation of China. The engineer was Li Bing, who did some great engineering. It is located at the Min Jiang River, in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, where the river used to flood and cause damage. So, the project was to split the river into two channels, one

for irrigation and one for outflow, to manage the flow of the water and stop the floods.

When you look at the site, you can see where the mountain was split to create a second channel for the water. This was before the invention of explosive powder, so the way they broke through the rocks was by heating, then quickly cooling them, which they knew made them fragile and could then be broken. In one of the pictures we took you can see the “fish mouth” which creates the split in the river. This was also long before concrete, so bamboo cages filled with rocks were placed into the river and refurbished each year. This allows for different flows of the river, depending on whether it is in the wet season or the dry season. Somehow, the design enables the current to flow in a way to naturally remove the silt.

The irrigation system built here, which has been expanded very much over the years, is responsible for this whole Chengdu region being, to this day, the “land of abundance.” So abundant in fact, that it was a huge factor in World War II, providing food and supplies for one third of all the people for the Chinese effort against Japan. Our former Vice President Henry Wallace visited the project.

We were also able to talk with a lot of local people during the visit, which was invaluable. It was very exciting, and very beautiful.

Beijing: Case Study of a Fully Coordinated Transportation Grid

by Kynan Thistlethwaite

Before I begin, I just want to express my gratitude to everyone who organized the trip. This was the first time I have travelled internationally, and I will absolutely treasure this experience for the rest of my life.

During our trip in China, we had the opportunity to visit the Beijing Traffic Operations Coordination and Command Center, or TOCC, the intelligence hub of Beijing’s modern comprehensive transportation center.

Beijing experiences a higher volume of traffic than any other city in the world. The duty of the TOCC is to coordinate all the traffic, including automobile, subway, bus, and bicycle traffic. The amazing thing is that this is



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Inside the Beijing Traffic Operations Coordination and Command Center (TOCC), the hub of Beijing’s modern comprehensive transportation system, which monitors and manages traffic flows for 19 transportation modalities.

done every 24 hours, all 365 days of the year.

At present, the TOCC has established four major monitoring sectors: road network operation, rail transit, public transportation, and comprehensive transportation, realizing dynamic monitoring of 19 transportation fields.

During major events, such as the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the Asia-Pacific



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Beijing’s TOCC produces traffic updates in real time to cell phones, navigation devices, and even electronic billboards along the routes, allowing travelers in this city of 24 million to divert from congestion.

Economic Cooperation Conference, and the 70th anniversary of the Chinese Victory over the Japanese during the Second World War, the TOCC has carried out special monitoring.

Here are just some of the innovative techniques that have been employed by the TOCC to reduce

heavy traffic, utilizing comprehensive monitoring and coordination:

The TOCC allows real-time traffic updates to pop up directly on your phone, navigation device, such as GPS, or even the electronic billboards you pass by. This is incredibly convenient, in a city with more than 24,000,000 people, who are constantly commuting.

Since the public has convenient access to this information, vehicles can be directed away from congested routes. The result? Journeys are 15% quicker, ensuring that people get home in time for what truly matters. The TOCC has also implemented an electronic parking map for the public, making it much easier to find a spot in the densely-populated city.

As we glimpse into Beijing's future, one thing is clear: with the TOCC at the helm, China is steering a journey that's efficient, intelligent, and sustainable. Many other cities across China now utilize similar systems to manage traffic and reduce congestion. That's definitely something to be admired, and replicated across the world. China has made tremendous progress in the field of smart technologies, and that knowledge can be given to other, less-developed countries as well.

Chengdu Railway Port: An International Logistics Platform

by Adrian Pearl

I would like to talk a bit about our visit to the Chengdu International Railway Port Economic Development Zone. Members of our delegation and our colleagues from the Schiller Institute understand that China today is the world's leading role model for how to bring about shared prosperity through long-term physical economic development and global cooperation. Throughout our travels in China, I was focused on finding examples of ambitious development projects that I could share with my fellow Americans, partly to tell them about the "real China" and partly to inspire them to think about how we can return to the best of our own traditions.

The economic development zone in Qingbaijiang

District near Chengdu was unlike anything I had ever seen before, and is something that Americans and people around the world should know about.

Immediately as we entered the zone, it was impossible not to notice the breakneck pace of development in the form of large clusters of buildings being constructed simultaneously. We saw this kind of thing everywhere we went in China, but in Qingbaijiang District it was on an entirely different scale.

At the Chengdu-Eurasia Commodity Pavilion, we saw the incredible array of both commodities



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The Chengdu-Eurasia Commodity Pavilion in the Chengdu International Railway Port Economic Development Zone offers an incredible array of both commodities and premium products from around the world.

and premium products from around the world, and learned about how the incremental addition of logistics services—expedited customs, supply-chain financing, and cold-chain logistics, for example—will soon make it possible to export Russian meat products to Vietnam, or Indian dairy products to Korea.

As the railway port grows to encompass a higher volume of trade flow, it will naturally become a more enticing home for manufacturers who will be able to easily source raw materials or components and deliver their value-added products to market. We saw an assembly line that was manufacturing front panels for televisions and took note of the remarkable level of automation in the process. But my biggest takeaway was a sense that the entire production system could be reconfigured to produce something entirely different in a matter of weeks or months if needed.

Chengdu is strategically located as a central hub in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a gateway to Europe, Russia, South and Southeast Asia and the rest of China. Being on the ground in Qingbaijiang District,

it was easy to perceive the critical role that the zone will play in China's national and global development plans. A big part of this was the development of a transportation and logistics "platform" capable of adapting to global market shifts as well as other factors like geopolitics. The staggering complexity of the world today means that no single railroad, maritime route, or development corridor can guarantee its successful deployment and operation, and I came away from our tour with the impression that the development of the railway port has been meticulously planned to account for this uncertainty and maintain its core value proposition.

Perhaps more than anything else, I was extremely impressed by the complex interactions between global, national, regional, and local development plans and the painstaking efforts to manage this complexity and build a community where people can thrive. We were able to view several maps of the planned development of Qingbaijiang District. Plans to build schools, residential communities, parks, and other foundations of modern life in the midst



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International logistics services, including expedited customs, cold-chain logistics, freight forwarding, and supply chain financing will soon be added to the capabilities of the Chengdu International Railway Port.

after enjoying some excellent Sichuan cuisine, we saw a large wedding celebration in the hotel ballroom. Prior to this, I could scarcely imagine a wedding taking place in between a bunch of industrial zones, but in this context it made perfect sense and in fact barely surprised me in the moment. I felt this was a testament to the harmony that is being cultivated between the success of the local

community and the national and global economic development, and it is just one more reason why I will be eagerly telling everyone I know about our visit to Qingbaijiang District.

The Most Important Friendship: China and the United States

by Megan Dobrodt

During our time in Chengdu, we were given a tour of the Sanxingdui Museum, which contains hundreds of artifacts from the nearby Bronze Age archeological site of the same

name, which has been linked to the ancient Shu Kingdom. It is my understanding that this archeological discovery showed that the Shu civilization goes back much earlier, perhaps more than 1,000 years earlier, than previously believed.



The public heritage Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan preserves hundreds of artifacts from the nearby Bronze Age archeological site associated with the ancient Shu Kingdom. At right, a characteristic Sanxingdui bronze head.



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of all of the industrial activity struck me as far more ambitious than anything I had seen in the United States or elsewhere.

After our factory tour, we took a five-minute bus ride to a nearby hotel for lunch. As we left the hotel

All of us were impressed by the skill and craftsmanship of this more than 3,000-year-old civilization. They had a clear mastery of metallurgy, as we saw in the wide variety of cast bronze objects and figures—some of which were incredibly large and intricate. Many of the artifacts we saw point to a civilization that had a strong connection to nature—to the sky and the heavens—and a strong representation of the human being, as we saw in the bronze masks and figures—some of which had very unique faces and characters. This resonated with what we learned of Chinese culture generally. It was fascinating to learn that these people had a mastery of certain long-term astronomical cycles, and also knew enough geometry to be able to divide the circumference of a circle into 5 equal parts.

The opportunity to spend an afternoon seeing the handiwork of a very ancient civilization in China was fascinating, and for me, sparked thoughts about the incredible and universal capabilities of the human mind—which we saw a glimpse of in the artifacts of these people so far removed from us in time and space.

Otherwise, I want to just say a few things about the various dialogues in which we took part. We met with the leadership of a number of different groups and participated in dialogues at two universities, and various industries, businesses, and community centers.

For me, this was the highlight of the trip. Having the opportunity, as Americans, to speak frankly about the current state of world affairs, about the very positive initiatives and proposals under which the majority of nations are gathering—such as the BRI projects, the BRICS+, and others—and very importantly about the ideas of the Schiller Institute for how we can bring the whole world—including the West, which is the big question mark—into this, was invaluable.

It put many of us, I think, into a paradoxical situation, in which we recognized the unfortunate and dangerous role our nation is currently playing on the world stage, and yet, we strove to represent and communicate the very best from America’s anti-colonial history, and the very best ideas of our nation—the notion of Hamiltonian National Banking, Franklin Roosevelt’s poverty alleviation programs in the New Deal, and John F. Kennedy’s commitment to joint research in space exploration.

We made many very valuable friends and connections on our trip, and we’re very much looking forward to collaborating in the near- and longer-term future to see if we can turn the tide of history now in the right direction.

The Challenge of Building a Community of a Shared Future

by Daniel Burke

I must say that I was very happy when I opened up the questionnaire given to us by the All-China Youth Federation at the end of our remarkable visit. They asked us, “Have you learned more about the Global Development Initiative? Global Civilization Initiative? The Belt and Road Initiative?” It is clear that our hosts would like Americans to better understand these crucial contributions of China to the creation of a new era of mutual benefit among nations.

I agree with Megan Dobrodt, that the opportunities we had for dialogue, such as those we enjoyed at Tsinghua University, Chengdu University, over tea in Beijing, and also in Siduhe village over barbecue and beer—these were my favorite moments, because they allowed us to understand the culture, the people, and the ideas that make those major government initiatives possible.

During our trip, the Chinese government released its white paper on the theory behind the “Global Community of Shared Future.” Several of us read it within hours of its publication. We noticed the section that discusses the cultural basis for the concept, as it exists in many different cultures. Many proverbs and famous minds are quoted in order to demonstrate the universality of this idea. But we noticed that there was no reference from the United States of America. If I may, I’d like to recommend that Lyndon LaRouche would be the best American to quote, because of his genuine fight over the course of his entire life for a new, just world economic order.

We spoke about this topic at Chengdu University, and were able to share the proposal of our founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche, which calls to expand the dialogue about the principles of a shared community of destiny to include students and youth at top universities from every continent. Just yesterday at the Valdai Club, President Putin contributed six principles for the new era. Helga Zepp-LaRouche has produced ten principles to add to the discussion. We hope we can collaborate to bring that dialogue to the level it needs to reach.

What we found in China was a civilization well-prepared by its culture, history, and founding philosophy to take on this role of global leadership. Here in the United States, we hope to lean on that strength, and borrow some of it, through learning, to grow the capability in the U.S.A. to work in harmony with China to create that new paradigm of mutual benefit.