China's Economy:
Rapid Change Brings New Challenges

A summary of Professor Lu Xueyi's keynote address entitled "The Situation and Challenges Facing China in the New Phase of Economic Development" delivered on April 21, 2000 in Nanjing at the Third Social Development Consultation of the Amity Foundation. Professor Lu is a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and president of China’s Sociology Association.

CHINA IS IN THE PROCESS of two historic transitions: from a traditional rural society to a modern industrial and urbanized one and from a planned economy to a socialist market economy. Both the tremendous achievements and progress that China has attained over the last 20 years and the various problems and difficulties that have emerged can be understood and explained in the context of these two historic transitions.

China's economy has grown more than fourfold since 1978 with China's industrial value increasing at an average rate of 11.7% a year. China is also moving rapidly from a rural to an urban society. Today, 30.4% of China's total population live in cities compared to only 18% in 1978. The transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented one has basically been accomplished. In 1997, about 50% of production was done under the market system. In the last 3 years, an even higher rise in market development has been recorded.

These remarkable economic achievements have brought new challenges. The reform of state enterprises has encountered great difficulty with about 20 million workers laid off (even though over 10 million have found new jobs). Since 1997, a sluggish market has greatly affected sales in industrial and agricultural products. There has also been a slowdown in exports due to the

Editor's Note:
IN THIS ISSUE of the Amity Newsletter, we bring to you some of the highlights and reflections on Amity's Third Social Development Consultation which was organized to celebrate Amity's 15th Anniversary. More than 80 participants from 20 countries around the world took part in the event. The plenary meetings were held in Nanjing April 20-22 but were preceded by three separate exposure trips to Gansu, Hunan and Yunnan where Amity has a wide-range of projects including medical training, integrated rural development and micro-credit projects for women. In Hunan, participants visited church-initiated projects. Bishop Ting's latest book, Love Never Ends, was launched at the opening reception in Nanjing.

"Bumper harvests have depressed farmers' incomes."

In agriculture, China has produced more than enough grain to solve the problem of food shortage. Since 1996, bumper harvests were reported for all kinds of farm crops. Farmers' incomes, however, have not increased. In fact, over the last 3 years, consecutive bumper harvests have resulted in falling farm prices, depressing farmers' incomes. Granaries and warehouses are full but rice, wheat and corn prices fell 31.7 percent between 1996 and 1999. At the same time, village and township enterprises are on a decline. Rural enterprises are undergoing changes and sales have stagnated. Urban job opportunities for farmers have also declined. All this raises doubts about any possible increase in rural incomes in the near future.

On another level, changes in social structure and management have not kept pace with economic development. Urbanization is restrained by a dualistic social structure based on a rural-urban dichotomy and a strict household registration system. China's index for urbanization is 30.4% which is lower than that for many developing countries and much lower than the 45.5% international average in 1996. If China can increase its speed of urbanization to the same level, 180 million farmers should be allowed to migrate to cities. This will generate a larger labor force, enhance consumption capacity and address many economic and social problems.

The very limited access to higher education is another problem. Enrolment in higher education was 3.7 million in 1997 constituting only 6.5% of those in the university age group, a figure far below the world average of 16.7%. This has caused an outflow of senior high students to other countries in search of higher education in recent years, resulting in a loss of quality personnel and accelerating urbanization. Bans on farmers' migration to the cities should be lifted. All cities should be open except for large urban centers such as Beijing.

If 20% of the rural population migrates to the cities in the next few years, agricultural production will not be affected while the income of farmers would increase by 25%. According to productive capacity, one farmer can till about one hectare of land. It would be enough to have only 150 million people work on farms in China. Farmers in China cultivate only 7% of the world's cultivated land but have managed to feed 21% of the world's population.

Most farmers are no longer hungry but they lack spending money. They are heavily burdened with different kinds of taxes or levies which cause social conflicts. The different policies applied to urban and rural populations based on a planned economy should be changed. These range from ownership, distribution, circulation, employment and taxation to education, medical care, labor insurance and pensions. A socialist market economy requires the integration of the urban and rural markets. Differences in policies for urban and rural residents should be removed.

Higher education should be made more accessible with the establishment of more colleges and universities. At the same time, the system of management of higher education should be reformed so that enrolment can be increased by 50%. In the past, social security was provided through work units in the urban areas or the communes in the rural areas. Economic reforms have brought changes to work units and they can no longer guarantee social security. Much has to be done to improve pension, employment, medical and health insurance systems. This is important for social stability.
Meeting the Challenges in the New Millennium

A summary of Dr. Wenzao Han's report on Amity's work delivered on April 21, 2000 at the Third Consultation on Social Development in Nanjing.

Fifteen years after its inception, Amity has taken great strides toward maturity as a development NGO. Our staff has grown from four to 35 and our projects span all 31 provinces. We have developed a reliable core of devoted and competent staff and enjoy the support and cooperation of many overseas partners. At the local and provincial levels, we have developed productive partnerships. Both domestically and internationally we have expanded our support network through links with the churches, government departments, academe as well as with Chinese and non-Chinese NGOs.

In the last five years, we have expanded the number of church-run and church-initiated projects. In the countryside, our work with the rural poor has taken on significance as pioneering efforts that have merited emulation by both NGOs and the government. We are particularly proud of our efforts in promoting a participatory and integrated approach to sustainable rural development. Our community-based rehabilitation projects have received national attention. We have initiated experiments and innovative approaches in social welfare services both for the physically and mentally challenged. Most important, through our work, I believe we have helped introduce development concepts and approaches that are relatively new in the Chinese context.

Capacity building and emphasizing human development

Development work, as distinct from charity work, is a process of empowering the weak and the dispossessed. Education and training equip people with the means to lift themselves out of poverty and deprivation. Priority is thus given to training programs. Our training is directed at members of target communities as well as local leaders, for informed and educated leaders can be important agents of change.

We also pay much attention to the gender issue. The law guarantees equal opportunities for women but gender-based discrimination is still pervasive, especially in rural areas. In the cities, issues of women's rights have become more acute with the deepening of reforms. Women are the first to go when factories downsize, find it harder to become re-employed, and tend to be retired earlier. The majority of school dropouts are girls. Whether in cities or in the countryside, women are still a marginalized group in society. Our goal is to provide systematic education and vocational training for them as an effective and realistic means to upgrade women's social status.

Promoting social change

Our projects have not only improved people's lives but promoted social change. Unlike government projects, which tend to be top-down, our projects are oriented the other way around. Education in democratic citizenry is part of development work.

Even though we are a small organization, our projects can improve local government policy to some degree since we come into direct contact with the masses and have a good grasp of their desires and difficulties. We often report their needs and ideas to the government and offer our views on problems that demand immediate solutions but are beyond our capacity.

Making Christianity more widely known in China

The founding of Amity provided a channel for Chinese Christian participation in social development. As a result, the concept of Christian mission has changed. In its 1993 consultation on "Church-Initiated Social Service and Development in China" Amity called for "the church to enter society" and "society to understand the church." Today, church-initiated social service projects are mushrooming all over the country.

Amity projects help Chinese people more fully understand the church by showing that Christians are concerned for those in difficulty, and that Christianity means "love for all." Our projects are a concrete expression of Christian love. Through them, both officials and local people can see and not just hear about the church's contribution to society. They show that Amity serves non-Christians as well.
Meeting new challenges
Over the last 15 years, China’s economy has expanded fourfold with an extraordinary growth rate of 8%, reducing the number of the poor from 200 million in the mid-80s to 42 million at the end of 1999. But, even as China as a whole becomes more prosperous, the task of eliminating absolute poverty is becoming a more serious challenge. The poorest rural communities remain locked in remote, inaccessible mountain areas. New forms of poverty are emerging in the cities as millions of migrant workers from the countryside converge on urban centers ill-equipped to meet their needs. Unemployment has surged as state firms undergo reforms, affecting particularly the women. And all this is taking place as state support for education, health, housing and welfare services is being reduced.

It appears that the challenges facing Amity Foundation have grown rather than diminished. As we gear ourselves to meet these challenges, our work will center on four major tasks:
1. To focus on poverty alleviation in Central and Western China;
2. To strengthen research and publicity work for fundraising purposes;
3. To strengthen project evaluation; and
4. To develop organizational capacity.

The Teachers Project will expand to Gansu, Qinghai, Guizhou, and Yunnan provinces if more teachers can be recruited in the years to come. Greater emphasis will be placed on leadership training in Amity-related teachers colleges through the sponsorship of in-service studies in top Chinese universities for young faculty.

Medical and health work will continue to focus on training community health workers in north- and southwest China. There will also be refresher courses for graduates of earlier courses. This division will continue to combat HIV/AIDS which is reaching epidemic proportions in China.

Social welfare projects will continue to provide care and material assistance for orphans and the elderly in need of special help. They will also move westwards through their incorporation into integrated community development projects.

Rural development projects will continue to uphold the concept of integrated community development and the participatory approach will be cultivated.

In its work with the visually impaired, Amity will continue to promote community eye health service, an integrated education program for blind children, community-based rehabilitation services and vocational training for adults with disabilities.

Church-run projects will be expanded and greater emphasis placed on the training of local church leaders to enable them to run projects well. Priority will be given to church-initiated community development projects which combine health, education and bio-gas and irrigation systems.

Meeting rising administrative costs
Amity’s administrative budget relies on a “core budget” and an “overhead charge” on project funds. The initial overhead charge of 3.5% was raised to 5% in 1991. However, travel and communication expenses rose dramatically when we shifted our priority westwards. The number of Amity staff has also increased sharply and this has been accompanied by a marked rise in salary scales in China over the last decade. Last but not least, our office equipment has been upgraded. All these have contributed to the rise in administration costs. We are therefore proposing to raise the overhead charge to 7%.

In conclusion, I wish to say that all of Amity’s achievements would have been difficult to attain without reliable sources of funding. These have provided a sound and stable foundation for Amity’s growth and I want to take this opportunity to thank all our friends, at home and abroad, within the church and outside, who have shared their resources so generously over the years. Your support, friendship and trust continue to inspire us. I believe we share a vision of China where all of the Chinese people can have a fair share of the fruits of development. Your support for Amity goes beyond poverty reduction—it helps develop civil society and nurture a culture in which the people themselves can better and more fully assume their social responsibilities.

Urban Poverty Conference in Beijing
A Symposium on “Urban Poverty and Possible Solutions,” co-sponsored by Amity and the Centre for Social Policy Research at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), was held June 26-28, 2000 in Beijing. It attracted about 50 scholars and experts from all over China, including four from Hong Kong. They came from universities, research institutes affiliated with provincial academies of social sciences and various ministries and commissions of the central government. There were heated discussions on such topics as root causes of urban poverty, the scale of urban poverty, the living conditions of the urban poor and their immediate needs, the establishment of a social safety net and the roles played by the government, NGOs and communities. Apart from the government’s role in building up the social safety net, experts and scholars also called for more room for NGOs and communities to play a greater role in the fight against urban poverty in China.
From Gansu to Nanjing

Birgitta Larsson reflects here on the exposure trip to Gansu Province and the meetings in Nanjing that all constituted Amity’s Third Social Development Consultation. Dr. Larsson is a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong and a representative of the Church of Sweden Mission in its work in China.

Which was the main event in Amity’s celebration of its fifteen years of existence? Some participants came only to the plenary sessions in Nanjing, April 20-22; others had the opportunity to take part in the preceding exposure visits. I think that both experiences were needed to obtain a full understanding of Amity’s ideology and development during these fifteen years.

I was in the privileged group which visited Gansu province. After three days’ exposure to this very dry and mountainous part of northwestern China, where almost half the number of counties are below the national poverty line, we could better understand what was being said in Nanjing.

When Dr. Wenzao Han gave his work report, both outlining Amity’s past development and pointing to the challenges in the new millennium, we could wholeheartedly endorse the shift in priority that had taken place in the 1990s. There is now an increasing emphasis on working in the north- and southwestern parts of China to help those in greatest need.

Village Health Workers
Amity’s main engagement in Gansu province is the training of medical workers. We saw many good examples of what seemed to be excellent cooperation between Amity, medical institutions and local authorities on different levels, both in training village health workers and in upgrading doctors for township hospitals.

We met many dedicated and impressive people who try to do a good job with sometimes very limited resources. However, those I will particularly remember are the “heroes and heroines” who work as village health workers in remote mountain villages. Their 18-month training for this task may not seem satisfactory, but their presence in the village makes a lot of difference to the villagers, who otherwise would have a long way to go for any medical knowledge or care. The fact that they are chosen by the villagers and sent by them to this training gives them a position of special trust. They actively promote disease prevention programs and seem to grasp every chance to disseminate knowledge of health and hygiene.

The village health worker who had been able to arrange for clean water to be piped to his village was a real hero. It had dramatically improved the health situation there. For the women in the village, where a female health worker had established her clinic, delivering babies became much safer. Prior to this, the absence of midwifery services held many hidden dangers for both mother and child. Since 1991, Amity has supported the training of 2,399 village health workers in Gansu province which means that almost the same number of villages now have established clinics with health workers.

Micro-Finance Project
Even if most of the Amity projects in Gansu province concerned medical training, we visited an encouraging project of a different nature, namely a Micro-Finance Project. Without going into detail about this well-prepared and elaborate project, I want to point out that at the end of 1999 as many as 298 women were involved in this loan scheme which made it possible for them to engage in different types of animal husbandry and small businesses. It was reported that the most important aspect of this project was not only the women’s income but the fact that their mental outlook and stature had changed thoroughly. The capacity building of women set a strong foundation for further development. The stereotype concept of “looking down” on women and children also changed. The group of women we met, who were busy collecting the repayment of loans and confidently planning the next step in their project, was a wonderful illustration of what Amity wants to achieve through its emphasis on human development and capacity building. I am sure groups like this will have the capacity to be active participants in a growing civil society.

Highlights in Nanjing
A substantial part of the Nanjing consultation was the lecture of Prof. Lu Xueyi who talked about China’s challenges in the new phase of economic development. He helped us to interpret much of what we had seen during our exposure trips; the unbalanced development, the disparity between...
the urban and the rural and between regions. The most controversial statement he made concerned the need to accelerate urbanization through adjusting the social structure and lifting the bans on farmer migration to small towns and medium-sized cities. Many participants wanted to discuss that point further, especially the environmental aspect of such a move.

When I listened to this proposal I thought of the peasants in a village in Gansu whose rain catchment project we had visited. In spite of a successful project in their particular village, the possibilities of living on agriculture in the most arid parts of Gansu are very limited and often imply a lot of fruitless efforts. For them, among others, life in an urban setting would probably be more productive. Highlights during the seminar in Nanjing, apart from lectures and reports, were to listen to Bishop Ting and to meet with some of the founders of Amity Foundation. Getting to know some of those who stand behind Amity’s famous C’s: compassion, commitment and competence, through their work in Amity’s offices and through their long travels was also important. I really appreciate the presentation of some of them in the previous issue of the Amity Newsletter.

It was also interesting to meet with other friends of Amity and to hear their reports of exposure visits to Yunnan and Hunan provinces. I noted that in those provinces, there were more church-run or church-initiated projects than in Gansu, where the Muslim presence among minorities is strong. However, Amity’s work in Gansu province is certainly an expression of God’s love for the poor and needy.

**Churches Reach Out in Hunan**

Katrin Fiedler, editor of the Amity News Service, reports on the exposure tour to Hunan Province that formed part of Amity’s Third Social Development Consultation. For a longer version of this article, see ANS Issue 5/6. 2000, "The Protestant Church in Hunan Province."

Xinhua County, a day’s bus ride from Changsha, the capital of Hunan, is one of the counties officially declared poor by the central government. This means that the average yearly per-capita income is 800 RMB [US$100] or less. Roads and transport are poor, and many villages consist of minute settlements scattered over huge mountains. The scarcity of arable land and frequent droughts make agriculture a constant struggle for survival. It is not surprising that a large number of projects aim at installing or improving irrigation systems. We also saw a church-run village clinic, a biogas-project and a newly built school. In the last few years, Xinhua County has seen a number of church-run development projects implemented. Usually, the church would provide part of the project funding. Church representatives oversee the project as a whole, while the local government provides its share of financial and logistical support. Beneficiaries in the villages contribute their labor. How does the church come up with its share of project support? Clearly, tiny Christian communities in a poverty-stricken area cannot fund development projects through their own means. In the case of Xinhua, substantial financial support comes from Norwegian churches.

With only two or three thousand Christians among a population of 1.25 million, Xinhua County is not exactly a Christian hub. It is therefore amazing to observe the large number of development projects carried out with church assistance and their impact on communicating the Christian message. "Now, every villager has heard of the Gospel," we are greeted in one location where the church has helped to set up a pumping station. At the heart of the pumping station we find "Gospel Well", a concrete structure with a short inscription from the Bible. Construction work for the projects often involves the whole community, a fact that also helps to make Christianity widely known. In Meihuadong, for instance, an irrigation project required the building of a kilometer-long channel by the village population. The youngest participant was 12 years old, while the oldest person involved was 83.

“The involvement of Hunanese Christians in development projects is, above all, a great message of hope,” notes Seikko Paunonen, of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. “It means hope to local communities who profit economically or in other ways from these projects. And it is a sign of hope that Chinese Christians will increasingly reach out to society. They do not exclude themselves any longer from what’s going on outside of the church building. Chinese Christians used to focus solely on Bible study and prayer, but this is becoming more and more a thing of the past.”
So Much Done With So Little
A Visit to Yunnan Province

Excerpts from a report prepared by Eduardo T. Gonzalez on behalf of the group that visited Yunnan Province during Amity’s Third Social Development Consultation. Dr. Eduardo Gonzalez is the Director of the Philippine Development Academy and a board member of the Philippine-China Development Resource Center in Manila.

The warm welcome given to us by the Miao people, dressed in their white and blue costumes, was a pleasant surprise to all of us. The lilting voices of the Miao choir, as they sang Handel’s Messiah and a number of well-known Christian hymns were especially captivating. There was an atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality, of high-spiritedness and informality. It also felt good to see the children so highly energized as they learn the basics in a modest classroom setting. Note that all these took place under very difficult economic circumstances for the people.

Our group was visibly impressed with the results of Amity’s work in Wuding County. There were obvious, clearly visible improvements in the lives of the villagers. They appear to be better off economically, seem to be in good health, and the children could go through several years of schooling. The Miao villagers also appear highly motivated, as strikingly shown by the high quality of their singing.

Mediating between government and the people
Credit goes to Amity for its ability to accomplish tasks under the toughest conditions, given its limited resources and small work force. Amity successfully taps the resources of both the local government and the communities where it works. Local labor and local government funding combine with Amity’s modest resources to create a formidable partnership that result in a wide range of projects in a variety of locations under extreme poverty conditions. Within China’s governance context – in which strong government pressure combines with an emerging market economy – Amity is in a unique position to implement the so-called “three littles” – the triangular relationship between Amity, the local government and the community.

Self-help nature of projects is impressive
Seeing the various Amity projects – biogas, water supply for both irrigation and domestic use, flood control, and the hillside crop terraces – the group better understood the degree of community cooperation that led to the completion of these undertakings, that the villagers were not wanting in skills and diligence but only in opportunity.

There were a few observations, though, that some cost considerations might have compromised the quality of some of the projects. There were suggestions that prior to implementation, such factors as selection of materials and environmental impact be included in evaluating projects in order to make them cost-effective in the long-run.

The church as key player in people’s development
The effort of Amity to involve Christian groups in its projects is commendable, and could pave the way for a more visible role of Christian churches in social development. There were suggestions, however, for inter-faith coordination, with Amity acting as a bridge between various faiths in China, offering them stakes in its projects, thereby giving the Christians themselves a stronger hand in consensus building.

Amity’s flexibility: Working within structures
Amity’s ability to work within the Chinese political context bodes well for its future in China’s development, and could be a model for other NGOs in China and elsewhere, working in similar circumstances. But questions also arise on how well Amity could explore in the future the possibilities open to it – as an independent NGO working with government but also challenging it when necessary.

Suggestions for future work
Capacity building for Amity staff and village leaders: While our group agreed that Amity’s capacity-building for both its workforce and the villagers is firmly in place, there were suggestions that Amity provide leadership training for village leaders and more in-depth negotiating skills for Amity staff. Our group worried that without the first, Amity would have no viable exit strategy in the communities chosen as project sites and without the second, Amity would not be able to strengthen its liaison work with foreign partners.

Initiatives on inter-faith organizing and mobilization:
There is still much to be done in terms of mobilizing Christian churches to assist Amity in its development efforts. But the better option is to reach out and do the organizing on an inter-faith basis, so that Amity’s own base of support, using a wider network of Christian and non-Christian groups, becomes more secure.

Organizational development:
From group members familiar with Amity’s organizational structure came the observation that Amity’s divisions will be better off with more coordination, to avoid work duplication and waste of resources. It was felt that organizational development in aspects such as team building and more coordinated systems and procedures could help.
Virtue of Love: Origins of Amity

Excerpts from a speech given by Bishop K. H. Ting at the Welcome Banquet celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Amity Foundation on 20th April, 2000 in Nanjing. Bishop Ting is a founder of the Amity Foundation and President of Amity’s Board of Directors.

How did we choose our name?

We felt we should first choose a Chinese name with Christian content but not suggesting anything evangelistic. So we decided to call this organization the “Virtue of Love”. According to the last verse from 1 Corinthians 13: “Faith, Hope and Love now abides and of these three, Love is the greatest.” So the Chinese name was Ai De—Virtue of Love. Then we decided to choose an English name and it was decided by a close friend of ours, Janice Wickeri. She felt that “Amity” would be a good choice and we did not object, for it coincides with “Ai De”. We try to tell our Chinese friends and colleagues that ours is not an evangelistic organization but a people’s organization initiated by Christians and joined by prominent persons.

We are awfully delighted that in the last 15 years, Christians and non-Christians from all over the world have given their hearty support. Without it, Amity could not have served China the way it has. One way to explain the reason for our existence is that we wanted very much to awaken the social conscience of Chinese Christians. Quite a few of them took great pride in being spiritual and having nothing to do with service. They attacked Amity as representing a “social gospel”. Although we felt “social gospel” was not a bad name, we also wanted to make ourselves useful and to serve China. Then, we also felt that the Chinese people were in great need of the services that we had in mind at the time. We are glad we could carry on in the last 15 years with help from all our friends.

Amity provides a way for Christians abroad to relate to us. That is why we started Amity and we are glad that more and more people have joined in. We especially want to express our thanks to all of you. We are very glad that some of you could visit and see what Amity is trying to do. ♦

LOVE NEVER ENDS

Papers by K. H. Ting
Edited by Janice Wickeri
Published By Yalin Press April 2000

With the publication of Love Never Ends, readers have in one volume most of Bishop K. H. Ting’s important articles since the resurgence of Christianity in China in the early 1980s. His focus on God as Cosmic Lover, rather than Cosmic Punisher, has been important for Christianity in China, and his writings on this theme have been an inspiration for Christians, not only in China, but throughout the world.

The book was the subject of a major conference held in Shanghai in July 1999 and is being used as a basic text for theological education in Chinese seminaries.

Janice Wickeri

The Amity Foundation was created at the initiative of Chinese Christian for the purpose of promoting health, education and welfare in the People’s Republic of China. It is an independent Chinese voluntary organization in which people from all walks of life may participate. Amity represents a new form of Chinese Christian involvement in society, through which Chinese Christians are joining hands with friends from around the world to serve the needs of China’s modernization.

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