ICWA
LETTERS

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EAST ASIA

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One in Fifty Million

—Traveling with China's Migrant Labor—

INTERIOR CHINA AND THE COAST (PART I)

"If you want to create wealth in the long-term, plant fruit trees;
If profit in the medium-term, raise animals. But if you need money
now, go to the coast and work."
— heard around the Guizhou province countryside

SHENZHEN, China February, 1998

Mr. Peter Bird Martin
Executive Director
Institute of Current World Affairs
4 West Wheelock Street
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Dear Peter:

I was one of the lucky ones. I had successfully competed with several hundred migrant laborers for a seat on train No. 488 and its 31-hour journey from China's backward interior to its prosperous coast.[1] My migrant-labor comrades and I stood, squatted and sat together as the train crawled through the mountains of Guizhou province over its 1,600-kilometer route toward the fertile farmland and wealthy cities of Guangdong province. It was just a few days after Chinese New Year [also called Spring Festival], the most important holiday of the year, and my travel companions were returning to China's coast after two weeks' vacation at home with family and friends.

"Home" is a powerful notion for most Chinese. Traditionally, they prefer not to leave the beloved soil of their ancestors — that is, absent war or natural disaster. But times are changing. Since the late 1970s, when Deng Xiaoping unleashed economic reform, push and pull factors[2] — created by the economic growth of a nation whose per-capita income doubled *two times* between 1978 and 1996,[2] and by the enormous contradictions of rural/urban and interior/coast disparity —

[1] Trains in China normally have three classes of tickets: soft-sleeper (a closed compartment with two soft bunk beds), hard-sleeper (rows of three-level bunk beds), and hard-seat (rows of benches, each pair facing each other). The number of tickets sold for soft-sleeper and hard-sleeper class are controlled; each ticket has an assigned bed. Hard-seat tickets, however, are often sold without limit, especially when large numbers of people are traveling — the result is a wild free-for-all. My hard-seat ticket for this 35-hour (the train was four hours late!), 1,600-kilometer journey cost 88 yuan, or about U.S.$10.

[2] "Push factors" encouraging migration away from the countryside include scarcity of cultivable land, surplus labor, low rural incomes, low status of agricultural work and unfavorable government policy. "Pull factors," which attract labor to the coast, include higher urban income levels, strong demand for labor, and the attraction of the life style of wealthier areas as communicated through various forms of media, most importantly television. It should be noted here that migrant laborers not only travel to the coast to find work, they also travel to urban areas within the interior (county-towns, cities, provincial capitals) where more money can be made.

have resulted in increasing numbers of people on the move.[3] The most concentrated sector of China's 115 million-strong "floating population" is migrant labor, some 50 million people who have left their homes to work in other parts of the country.[4]

Despite increased mobility, "home" remains an important part of their emotional makeup and central to their sense of responsibility. The result is a fascinating phenomenon each year before and after Chinese Spring Festival: millions upon millions of people on the move — crowded into buses, trains and planes — returning home to celebrate the two-week holiday and then flowing back to the coast to continue or search for work.

Migrant labor is one of China's most controversial issues. Because of the sheer numbers involved, it is also one of the country's most important. Has migrant labor contributed to China's growth, or is it simply a nuisance, an unwelcome result of reform? Does migrant labor threaten or promote social stability? Does migrant labor leave those left behind poorer, or does it transfer wealth to China's backward regions? Is migrant labor divisive, or does it help integrate a country characterized by pockets of prosperity in the cities and special economic zones? What role should the government play in this otherwise spontaneous flow of human resources? Obviously, the answers to these questions, especially the views of Chinese government leaders, create very different policy responses to this unusual population group — growing and on the move — which outnumbers the combined populations of Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhou.[5]

In order to form my own opinions on the role and prospects of China's migrant labor, I decided the best place to begin was not in books, newspaper articles and interviews with government officials, but rather on a piece of hard-fought-for bench shared with migrant laborers in a train carrying thousands of this mighty army's troops from their homes in the interior to the coast.

HARD-SEAT

As I stood outside the Duyun train station, enjoying what would probably be the last breaths of fresh air I would have for two days, I noticed a steady but quiet stream of people, baggage in-hand, filing into the narrow door of the train station's tea room. Naturally curious, I walked over to see what was happening. "Two yuan for a head-start on the rest of the masses," a train attendant announced at the door. I dished out two yuan and slipped in

On the first day after the Chinese Spring Festival, the Guiyang train station was packed with people trying to purchase tickets to travel back to China's coast.

[3] Compare this to the shortest length of time it took other countries to double their per-capita income just one time: Britain, 58 years (between 1780-1838); the U.S., 47 years (between 1839-1886); Japan, 34 years (between 1885-1919); and South Korea, 11 years (between 1966-1977). The pace of change in China is frenetic.

[4] The term "floating population" refers to all people — children, elderly, working age, urban and rural — who have left their place of official household registration (*hukou*), either temporarily or permanently, to reside in another part of the country. I arrived at the above figures based on an estimated 20% growth per year of official figures from China's Ministry of Public Security (80 million floating population in 1996) and Administrative Bureau of Population Registration (30 million migrant laborers in 1995; the bureau estimated a 20% increase between 1994 and 1995). My figures are consistent with the range of estimates I have seen in other publications.

[5] From a different perspective, the number of Chinese migrant workers approximates the individual (not combined) populations of the United Kingdom, South Africa, Thailand, South Korea and Ethiopia.

Pandemonium breaks out as people stake out space on our car.

the door with the others. There in the dimly lit, bar-like atmosphere stood at least 100 people crowded toward a door on the other side of the room that would eventually open onto the station's platform-side of the building.

Imagine the starting gates at the Kentucky Derby, with only one difference: all eight horses have to fit through one gate at the jingle of the starting-bell. Once the gate opens, anything goes. And though no prize money is at stake on the trains, the difference between getting to sit for 31 hours or having to stand or squat is enough incentive to muster every ounce of energy available, and then some.

After about 20 minutes of waiting in the dark, crowded silence, the door cracked opened and daylight suddenly shone into the room. The bell had sounded. After initial gridlock, the physics of the mass convergence of flesh began to spit people through the doorway. After almost losing my left arm, I, too, popped into the daylight of the train platform. Once through the door, to my surprise and temporary relief, we were immediately forced into a single-file line and led by train security officers toward the final car, an empty one provided for those in Duyun headed to Guangzhou (train no. 488 had originated four hours up-rail in Guiyang). The rest of the cars already overflowed with people.

Though I was about 40th in the single-file line of roughly 250, and knew there were at least 100 seats in the car, I was suspicious of the fragile order (long, single-file lines are rare in China). The officers had difficulty forcing back the occasional traveler who broke from the ranks in an attempt to get ahead. Though I and those in front and in back of me walked slowly and remained in line, internally I, like everyone else, was coiled like a spring, fully prepared to join a rush at the train door.

Order was preserved — that is, until the single-file line was released into the car. As soon as I was up the steps and had turned down the aisle, I confronted a surprise burst of activity: people scrambled back and forth claiming seats, throwing luggage onto the racks above, blocking others from their space. As I began to run down the aisle, a stout man wearing a black leather jacket and wire-rim glasses waved me over: "Hey! Hey! Hey! You sit here," he yelled above the pandemonium as he stood blocking a two-seat bench. "I'm saving this other one for my little brother. You sit in this seat, my brother will sit in this one." I threw my bag in the rack above and sat down. Phewh! I had a seat.

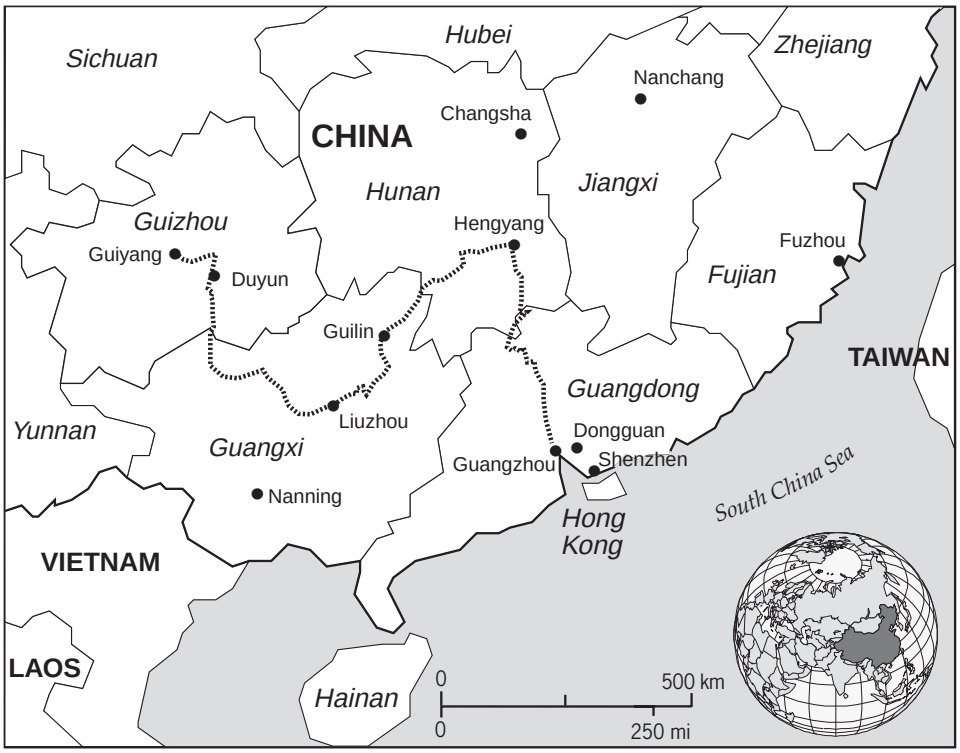
Though the chaos continued around me, every competitive nerve in my body finally relaxed. When the man's little brother arrived and sat down, big brother slipped out through the train's window, lowering himself onto the gravel below.

Now I could focus on the next tasks at hand: sitting for 31 hours, and getting to know those around me.

Right on schedule, the train began to roll down the tracks at 1:11 p.m. Our car, now full of three times as many as people as the number of seats, began to settle in. Like elementary school days when I traded lunch-bag goodies for others' treats, the first several hours of the ride involved an occasional offer of what each of us sitting in our little group had packed for the long journey: hard-boiled tea-eggs, sunflower seeds, dried fruit, cigarettes, candy and every form of cured pork imaginable.[6] Some fell asleep, decks of cards were shuffled, magazines and newspapers were exchanged, conversations began. The entire car, divided naturally into groups of four to seven people by the position of the benches, began to get acquainted.

Unusual sunshine lit up the blue sky and fields of yellow rapeseed blossoms provided a delightful fore-

[6] Most families in rural China slaughter a pig to eat during Spring Festival. One friend from the countryside in Guizhou told me their entire village kills their pigs on the same day; it is a community event, with firecrackers and much excitement. The meat is smoked, sausaged and enjoyed throughout the festival season. A number of people on the train from Guizhou to Guangzhou invited me to sample their homemade pork specialties.



Days after the Spring Festival concludes, millions of migrant laborers who spent the holidays at home return to the coast in search of a share in the relative wealth of coastal China. The most popular coastal destination for people from Guizhou is Guangdong province. Our train from Guizhou to Guangzhou traced the 1,600-kilometer route shown here.

ground to Guizhou's beautiful mountains. Everyone was fresh; conversation was lively. Even those left standing and squatting in the aisles seemed upbeat.

As we got acquainted, it turned out that most of those sitting around me were "off-post," or laid-off, factory workers headed for the coast to look for a way to support their families.[7] Directly across from me sat a quiet, self-confident man, about 30 years old, who was returning to his job in a Shenzhen electronics factory, a job he had already held for a number of years. The annual journey back to Duyun to see his wife and daughter, for him, was no major ordeal. He was used to it. One of the first things he told me, however, was that "people on this train won't tell you, and you can't see it on their faces, but they're scared to death. They fear the unknown that lies ahead of them. Most of them don't know where they are going."

Sitting next to him was his 20-year-old companion, a friendly, diminutive and hyper chap. The young fellow enjoyed singing along with the pop music that floated through the train's speakers. He also seemed to enjoy climbing across the tops of the benches in his stocking feet. The failing state enterprise he worked for in Duyun could not compete with his hopes for wealth on the coast. This was his first trip to Guangdong.

Another young man, 24, who shared my bench with me, had recently been laid off from his Duyun factory job. He was going to see his brother who works in Dongguan, a city near Guangzhou filled with export-targeted manufacturing plants. He hoped his brother could help him land a job.

A woman on the bench behind me was interested to know why I as a foreigner would travel hard-seat class. "Why not at least go hard-sleeper," she asked. "It's only 100 yuan [U.S.$12] more."

"If I traveled hard-sleeper," I said loud enough for all of my traveling companions to hear, "I would not have the chance to meet nice folk like you all. And you? Why are you traveling hard-seat?"

"I used to work for a state-owned children's clothes factory in Duyun, but left because it could no longer pay my wages. I'm headed for Shenzhen."

"What would be your ideal kind of work?" I asked.

"*Jiating funu* [housewife]," she joked, "but I'd settle to be someone's maid."

THE LAID-OFF

I shouldn't have been surprised that most of those I was meeting were laid-off urban factory workers from Duyun, but I was. I had always imagined migrant labor as folks from the agricultural countryside, part of China's army of 200-million (!) surplus rural labor.

[7] "Off-post" (*xiagang*), sometimes translated as "laid-off," refers to state-owned enterprise workers who have been asked not to come to work because of factory shutdowns, lack of production or insufficient funds to pay salaries. Of the off-post workers I have met, most are supposed to receive 30% of their salaries, though many factories cannot pay even that. Off-post workers tell me that for all practical purposes they are unemployed (*shiye*). Off-post workers — totaling at least 30 million nationwide — however, are not included in China's official unemployment figure, said to be only 3.2% in urban areas in 1997.

As the train rumbled down the tracks, I began to realize that, with the slow-motion collapse of much of China's state-owned sector, traditional migrant labor is absorbing a new type of person: urban factory workers from across the country, some skilled and others not, who are joining the search for wealth in Chinese cities and special economic zones.[8] One fellow on the train told me that in Duyun, a city of 400,000 that was developed around state-owned industry, at least 30,000 people have been laid off, 80 percent of whom have left Duyun to look for work on the coast. This is just a drop in the bucket of the estimated 30 million across the country who are being forced to find food outside the "iron rice bowl."

After my dinner [a plastic bowl of instant noodles] I showed the folks around me my one-and-only card trick — a real show stopper. While I was in the middle of the trick, a teenage girl and boy emerged through the crowd. The boy was very shy and did not speak. The girl, giggling between phrases, asked on his behalf if I would be willing to take a picture of the boy and his four friends. They had noticed my camera. I was in the middle of my card trick and it was already late, so I told them I would come find them the next day. They told me they had seats about halfway down the next car.

The night was miserable. By 11 p.m. I had already been sitting for 10 hours. Any discomfort to that point had been diverted by snacks, reading, card games and, most of all, fascinating conversation. But now, no matter how much I shifted around in my seat, I could not get comfortable. My back ached. My neck was stiff. My buddies — some asleep, some staring in a daze — and I leaned on each other. Even a man I had not spoken with, who squatted pitifully beside my bench, rested his head against my thigh. He was sound asleep. But worst of all, the air inside the car was stifling. The sour stench of urine from the bathroom, mixed with an oppressive haze of cigarette smoke, hung like smog. Trash had begun to build up in the aisles and under the seats. If I hadn't had to breathe, I wouldn't have.

Like a computer in suspend mode, my mind slipped into a fog as I sat shifting back and forth, in and out of sleep. All I could think of, beyond my own physical discomfort, was how much I respected these people for what they were going through just to make ends meet.

By morning light we had entered Hunan province. The weather had turned cold and rainy. At most stops we couldn't open our window, fearing that people outside trying to get on the train would force their way through our window.

By lunchtime, we were nearly 24 hours into the trip. I no longer was an ICWA Fellow seeking to understand what my fellow travelers were experiencing. By this time in the journey, I, like them, was just trying to get through the trip. A monstrous headache descended. I felt like a fish lying on the ground, out of water — gills moving gently up and down, gasping for life. I began to feel sick.

To get my mind off my discomfort, I decided to visit the teenagers who had asked for a picture the night before. I asked a man who had been standing at my side, and leaning on me for most of the last 12 hours, to hold my seat for me. He was glad for the chance to sit down. Before I began to push my way through the aisle I swallowed a couple of Advil in the hope that they would bring some relief.

As I came into view the boys seemed delighted to see me. They cleared a space for me on their bench, pulled

At one stop in Hunan province my companions opened the window just long enough for me to take this picture of people trying to push their way into the train's doorway. As soon as those in the back of this crowd saw our opened window, they rushed toward us. We were able to close it just before the crowd closed in.

[8] Failing state-owned factories are a major issue facing the entire nation at present. How to reform the state-owned sector, this vestige of 40 years of central planning and economic inefficiency, is a dilemma that faces both national and local leadership. Duyun, our home in Guizhou, is a city that was built up through the development of state-owned industry during the 1950-70s. It has been especially hard-hit by the state-owned enterprise quandary.

out some home-cured ham strips, and asked me to do my card trick again. As I shuffled the deck, I asked them why they had decided to leave home.

"We're from the countryside in northeast Guizhou; it's very poor there. We want to come out, earn some money, and see what we can learn. Who knows what will happen? But we can't stay at home."

I was fascinated by these teenagers' attitudes. They were attracted to, not envious of, the relative wealth of China's coast — an area of China they had seen only on television. And as a group of five buddies, traveling together for their first time away from home, they did not seem afraid.

From the way they talked about working the stony fields back home, these young men seemed to represent the views of a large number of China's rural laborers who consider agriculture to be an unprofitable, unattractive and even redundant economic activity. In the rural regions of China's interior where there are few nonagricultural activities, migration is often seen as the only way out. After all, if one family member leaves home — like these young middle-school dropouts — it means one less mouth to feed. And if the migrant is able to land a job, even the dirtiest of manual-labor jobs, he earns on average in *one month* what he would earn in an *entire year* at home. In this way, one family member who has gone to the coast may be able to support an entire family back in China's rural interior.

When asked who looked after the fields in their absence, these young men, the strong-backs of their families, said that the middle-aged and elderly were left to undertake farming. This same answer was given by another group of rural migrants I spoke with who had squeezed their way onto the train in Hunan. Though just two groups of young migrant laborers, their comments made me think how interesting it would be to do a study observing the link between mass out-migration of the most healthy and strong men and women of rural communities, and the impact it is having on agricultural productivity. After all, it was just recently [the mid-1990s] that China turned in the course of one year from a net exporter to a massive importer of grain. Certainly, the wave of China's 50 million migrant laborers, the majority of whom are from rural areas, impacts the entire country.

As our train crossed from Hunan into Guangdong province, even though we were at least four hours from our destination, everyone seemed renewed by the reality that we were nearing the end of the trip. Groans changed to humming, card playing started back up, life came back to peoples' faces, conversation picked up again. Even my headache went away.

Our train was four hours late; we didn't arrive at the Guangzhou train station 'til 12 midnight. After 35 hours crowded together, we sent each other into the night with sincere wishes for success and safety.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF MIGRANT LABOR

All the people I met on the train were young (mostly 20s), had a shared need to leave their homes, and a common destination — the cities and special economic zones of Guangdong province. But beyond the general observation that a growing number of laid-off urban factory workers were joining the masses of predominantly rural migrant labor, I found no other common pattern. Each individual had a specific story as unique as his or her life.

I have read the literature that evaluates migrant labor as a social, economic and political threat. Since they form

The five boys surrounding me are middle-school dropouts from northeast Guizhou headed to the coast for the first time. Their parents support what they are doing, though one boy said it's very hard on his mother. These young men and millions like them across the country are part of China's 200 million surplus rural labor. If they are lucky they will find a job in a factory or on a construction crew. What they can make in one month on the coast is often equal to, or surpasses, 12 months' earnings at home.

a group outside the system, it is argued, there is no way to organize or control these people. Whether for family-planning purposes, concern over rising crime, or just the menace of the unemployed sleeping in the streets, migrant labor lives beyond the reach of the state. Others also cite migrant labor's vulnerability to exploitation and the lack of basic social services available to them, especially health care. Needless to say, it doesn't take much imagination to envision a chaotic drama of 50 million jobless migrant laborers swamping China's cities.

But that is not how most people see the issue, especially those from China's interior a and growing number of government officials. Many view migrant labor as a normal consequence of economic reform, which, while loosening control of China's countryside through the breakup of the commune system, encourages some areas and some people of China to prosper first (namely coastal cities and special economic zones). As a *de facto* component of government policy, therefore, it is only natural that large numbers of people would flow from the less- to the more-developed areas of the country. The challenges of migrant labor are indeed very real. The contributions the laborers make, however, to both the coastal areas as well as their home regions, outweigh the costs and risks.

"The general freedom Chinese labor has had to pursue wealth, regardless of where it may be found, has alleviated what would otherwise be unbearable pressure, and certain instability, in China's impoverished interior regions."

And while migrant labor can be viewed as a threat to stability, an equally persuasive logic argues that migrant workers are the thread that keeps a rapidly transforming China from ripping apart. Migrant labor serves to both relieve pressure from the country's impoverished regions and to transfer resources and skills back to those areas. When I put the "stability" question to a Guizhou government official who works in Shenzhen, he responded immediately with an interesting comparison: the threat of starving North Korea that looms over South Korea. "If North Koreans could travel to South Korea as migrant labor," he said, "the problem of instability on the Korean peninsula would be solved." His analogy is obviously not a perfect one, but I got his point. The general freedom Chinese labor has had to pursue wealth, regardless of where it may be found, has alleviated what would otherwise be unbearable pressure, and certain instability, in China's impoverished interior regions.

In addition, much of China's economic growth has been built by the callused hands and sweat of migrant labor. In urban areas, for instance, migrant labor often does the dirty work that locals would never touch. China's powerful export market, as well, has been underwritten by the inexpensive and willing labor of those from the interior.

Like the powerful force of Overseas Chinese — ethnic Chinese who live outside China but who contribute billions in gifts and investment to their ancestral homeland each year — China's "Overland Chinese" (my term for the millions of migrant laborers who work on the coast but who remit significant amounts of cash to their homes in the interior) play an important role in their local economies. A Guizhou official who runs a government-representative office in wealthy Shenzhen told me that in 1997, migrant laborers from Guizhou remitted 5 billion yuan (U.S. $600 million) to family members back home. That figure equals Guizhou's entire annual local-government revenue! It is also equivalent to 10 percent of the province's gross domestic product. In this regard, one of the most important contributions made by migrant labor is the ability to get resources directly into the hands of individual families in China's poor interior, something government bureaucracies and aid programs seem to have great difficulty doing.

The Guizhou *Economic Daily* reported this month a story of 30 migrant laborers, all from the same village in Guizhou but who work in different locations on China's coast, who recently formed an "association" to support their home village. In that this effort is directed to support the home village as a whole, it is uncommon. Most funds from migrant labor are remitted directly to family members, and do not contribute to village services like education and health care. Nevertheless, the example illustrates the Overseas-Chinese-like role migrant labor plays. To become a member of the association, each worker must agree to do three things: (1) learn one skill they can share with fellow-villagers, (2) provide at least one piece of information to the village regarding work conditions on the coast, and, (3) provide an annual donation to the village.

The contribution made by migrant labor to their home villages is, therefore, not just in money. Several migrant laborers told me that beyond the funds remitted home, they believe their role is to open their peoples' minds to new ways of doing things and try to keep their people from being satisfied with simply having enough clothes to wear and food to eat. In fact, many migrant laborers, after a few years of "eating bitterness" on the coast, wake up to realize they could be their own boss back home using the skills they have learned. In this way, migrant labor serves as a conduit to transfer resources, skills and experience from wealthier areas back home.

Economic analysts agree that the gap between the coast and the interior will not begin to close for at least the next 30 years. In the meantime, the labor that flows from China's interior to the coast — and even from more-wealthy areas in the interior to less-wealthy areas — serves as an important mechanism to transfer capital, skills and knowledge. The result is an ongoing evolution

in China's interior, though perhaps slow, made possible by hometown heroes who have risked much by leaving home. This quiet dynamic of family members sending resources and skills back home is an important complement to government efforts to bring greater balance to the countryside through development of infrastructure, education and basic services.

PROSPECTS FOR MIGRANT LABOR

My primary concerns over the future prospects of migrant labor revolve around the very issues that have been the source of its success: the central role migrant labor has played in being the strong back behind the construction of China's urban areas, and the inexpensive labor for the country's dynamic export market. As long as reasonable growth continues in the Chinese economy, I suppose the jobs will continue to be there for migrant labor. But what is reasonable growth? What if China's economy heads south? How will the ramifications of the present Southeast Asia financial crisis work its way through the Chinese economy — especially its impact on Chinese exports? How will 30 million laid-off factory workers, many of whom have joined the migrant labor flood, affect what has up to this point been a rural phenomenon? What if there are natural disasters in China's interior that drive more labor to cities in search of work? What if worst-case scenarios in each of these questions happen at the same time?

Population pressures in the interior (people increase, cultivable land does not) and rural/urban surplus labor, totaling over 200-million people — think of the population of the United States — almost guarantee that the numbers who desire to work in the country's wealthier urban areas will continue to increase, especially if wage differences remain unbalanced.

Aware of worrisome economic storm-clouds on China's horizon, and after staring one of China's biggest challenges in the face — for 35 consecutive hours, sitting up — it is hard not to be anxious.

Having said this, one of the greatest hopes for the future of migrant labor is that while sufficient country-wide economic growth is sustained (not a given) wealth and economic opportunity will spread to more regions and layers of Chinese society. In this way, those seeking nonagricultural economic opportunity, would have more options. Risk for the country as a whole would also be more diffuse. Indeed, this has been happening. But from the perspective of poor, interior Guizhou, it is not happening fast enough.

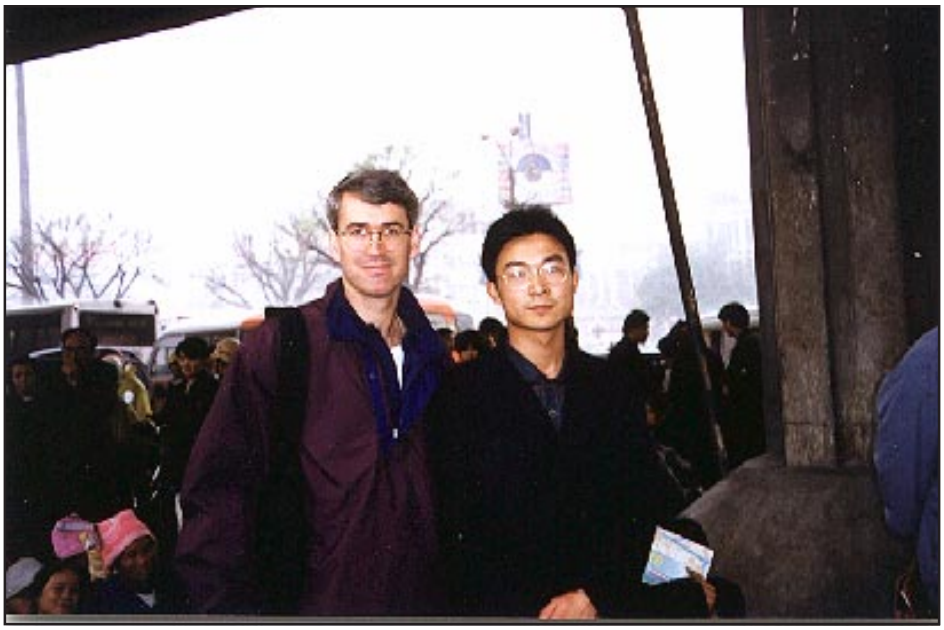
No question about it: Prospects for migrant labor cut both ways. It should continue to be a major contributor to economic growth, progress among the poor and social stability. At the same time, however, migrant labor will remain a threat and challenge, especially if and when there is a serious economic downturn. That's the tightrope China has to walk.

*****

After spending an additional week in Guangdong province, I flew from Shenzhen back to Guiyang, capital of Guizhou. The 35-hour train ride still fresh on my mind, I enjoyed every moment of the 90-minute flight. No one rushed for my seat when we got on the plane, there were no odors, no one squatted in the aisles or leaned against me. As I flew in the comfortable airplane cabin, I thought how easy it is for most of us "more privileged" folk — the Chinese government official, foreign diplomat, development expert or academic — to observe and make judgments on China's most important issues from 30,000 feet.

Sincerely,

Dan



This former elementary school teacher from rural Jiangxi province told me proudly that he made 2,000 yuan a day during this year's Spring Festival. His older brother, who began as a poor migrant laborer as well, now owns three buses. Their "family business" transports migrant labor from the Guangzhou train station to surrounding cities. "You can call me Sonny," this young man said. "Everyone in Hong Kong has an English name, so I have one as well."

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Institute of Current World Affairs Fellows and their Activities

Adam Smith Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is studying and writing about the republics of Central Asia, and their importance as actors within and without the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. Degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Christopher P. Ball. An economist, Chris Ball holds a B.A. from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and attended the 1992 International Summer School at the London School of Economics. He studied Hungarian for two years in Budapest while serving as Project Director for the Hungarian Atlantic Council. As an Institute Fellow, he is studying and writing about Hungarian minorities in the former Soviet-bloc nations of East and Central Europe. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Shelly Renae Browning. A surgeon specializing in ears and hearing, Dr. Browning is studying the approaches of traditional healers among the Aborigines of Australia and the indigenous peoples of Vanuatu to hearing loss and ear problems. She won her B.S. in Chemistry at the University of the South, studied physician/patient relationships in China and Australia on a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship and won her M.D. at Emory University in Atlanta. Before her ICWA fellowship, she was a Fellow in Skull-Base Surgery in Montreal at McGill University's Department of Otolaryngology. [SOUTH ASIA]

Chenoa Egawa. An enrolled member of the Lummi Indian Nation, Chenoa is spending two years living among mesoAmerican Indians, studying successful and not-so-successful cooperative organizations designed to help the Indians market their manufactures, agricultural products and crafts without relying on middlemen. A former trade specialist for the American Indian Trade and Development Council of the Pacific Northwest, Chenoa's B.A. is in International Business and Spanish from the University of Washington in Seattle. [THE AMERICAS]

Paige Evans. A playwright and former Literary Manager of the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York City, Paige is looking at Cuba through the lens of its performing arts. With a History/Literature B.A. from Harvard, she has served as counselor at the Buckhorn Children's Center in Buckhorn, Kentucky (1983-84), as Arts Editor of the International Courier in Rome, Italy (1985-86), and as an adjunct professor teaching a course in Contemporary American Playwrights at New York University. She joined the Manhattan Theatre Club in 1990. [THE AMERICAS]

Marc Michaelson. A program manager for Save the Children in The Gambia, Marc has moved across Africa to the Horn, there to assess nation-building in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and (conditions permitting) availing and unavailing humanitarian efforts in northern Somalia and southern Sudan. With a B.A. in political science from Tufts, a year of non-degree study at the London School of Economics and a Master's in International Peace Studies from Notre Dame, he describes his postgraduate years as "seven years' experience in international development programming and peace research." [sub-SAHARA]

Randi Movich. The current John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow, Randi is spending two years in Guinea, West Africa, studying and writing about the ways in which indigenous women use forest resources for reproductive health. With a B.A. in biology from the University of California at Santa Cruz and a Master of Science degree in Forest Resources from the University of Idaho, Randi is building on two years' experience as a Peace Corps agroforestry extension agent in the same region of Guinea where she will be living as a Fellow with her husband, Jeff Fields — also the holder of an Idaho Master's in Forest Resources. [sub-SAHARA]

Daniel B. Wright. A sinologist with a Master's Degree in International Relations from the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University, Dan's fellowship immerses him in southwest China's Guizhou Province, where he, his journalist-wife Shou Guowei, and their two children (Margaret and Jon) will base themselves for two years in the city of Duyun. Previously a specialist on Asian and Chinese affairs for the Washington consulting firm of Andreae, Vick & Associates, Dan also studied Chinese literature at Beijing University and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary of Pasadena, California. [EAST ASIA]

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