

China: August 6-14, 2005

Sat, Aug 6: left Chicago at 7 a.m. for Newark then Beijing

Sun, Aug 7: met at Beijing airport by Yanjian and another young conference organizer, taken by bus to Tianjin; reception that evening; met Tianyu and Lin Chun. Tianyu said my argument that "you can't get there from here" had convinced him.

Mon, Aug 8: Conference

As I was moving to my seat, I passed Joshua Ramo, who said he'd read my paper and agreed with most of it. I was startled to see how young he was. (He served as foreign affairs editor for Time Magazine for 5 years, is now a managing partner for Goldman Sachs, and is teaching at Tsinghua University (I think) in Beijing. Studied Latin American economies at U. Chicago.)

Opening speeches by the president of Tianjin Normal U, and by Yu Keping--the key organizer (Center for Comparative Politics and Economics) and Huang Ping (CASS)--co-editor of a fine book, China Reflected, a copy of which he gave me later

Break for tea and coffee and a group picture

The morning session started off with a paper by Ramo--a well-delivered, modest presentation, expressing surprise at how much attention his concept (Beijing Consensus) has generated. His point was to debunk the view that China could somehow be "isolated," or that China's rise would not change anything. The fact is, China's rise is changing the world. There is a debate in China as to whether there is a "China model," and if so, should it be pushed as an alternative to the "Washington Consensus." Ramo argued that his paper attempted to "stick to the facts" and not speculate as to "where China is going." He did, however, venture that China has so far modernized by taking over Western concepts, but he expects China to soon go beyond that, coming up with technologies and organizations unknown to the West. (Certain recent Chinese internet companies have no known analogies in the West.)

Yu Keping's paper was formulaic--the "Chinese model" is a strategic choice for China that has been successful, but also faces great challenges. The market economy is good, but we can't ignore the need for government controls. We shouldn't equate "globalization" with "capitalism." (The former but not the latter is inevitable.) Politics must also be reformed, but carefully, so that we have a "soft landing." Democracy should be seen as an end, not a means. Civil society must be developed, and cooperate with the state. Yu claims there are currently 3 million grassroots organizations in China and 18 million NGOs

Tianyu argued that the "China model" is a not-yet-existing but only emerging normative model. It's important to have a developmental goal. Yes, we cross the river one stone at

a time, but we need to think about where, on the other side, we want to arrive. He talked about the importance of China's revolutionary legacy, its socialist heritage and values, its Cold War legacy (China understands imperialism). China should aim for a harmonious society, which cannot be achieved under capitalism. We must insist on equity, no exploitation, collective ownership, but avoid the problems of central planning--poor incentives, no freedom of consumption. We have to think about how do define socialism. We should aim

- to upgrade people's standard of living
- not encourage luxury consumption
- at internal equity
- keep labor from becoming a commodity
- maintain government control over capital allocation
- to give workers the right to ownership shares
- at full employment

We need political and social stability and intergenerational morality. We need to confront the challenges of neoliberalism and the need for health care reform. Tianyu thinks the CPC shares these commitments.

Tian Chunsheng (a woman) argued that the China model developed as a realistic response to China's particular situation, and that China shouldn't try to copy Western models.

[All these presentation were short, less than 20 minutes. The full length papers were not available in translation. Given the difficulties of simultaneous translation, my summaries of the Chinese papers may be less than fully accurate.]

There were brief responses by two commentators, then a 45 minute open discussion. There was considerable discussion of the difference between a "Beijing Consensus" and a "China model," the latter being preferred, but even that idea was criticized as "too idealistic" (by Samir Amin).

During lunch I spoke with Tianyu. He talked about Arif Dirlik's hostile response to him at an earlier conference, when he suggested some minor alterations. [Dirlik's side of it, told later, was that Tianyu had wanted him to tone down his criticism of the current leadership, but that he would have none of it.] He also told me of Joseph Fewsmith's treachery after the Hangzhou Conference, his writing to the Ford Foundation, urging them never again to fund Tianyu's "anti-American" conferences--which they never did. He told Tianyu what he had done, vowing to block him at every opportunity.

The afternoon session took place without Tianyu or Lin Chun present. I was bothered by that, since I was making my presentation at that session, but I learned later that Lin Chun's father had become ill and died, in Beijing, and that they had had to rush there.

Samir Amin offered a global perspective, arguing that the great danger right now, which must be defeated, is the U.S. plan for global military dominance. Until it is defeated,

there is little room for global progress. We must struggle for an alternative, a multi-polar world that embraces 100% of humanity, not just 15%. Right now the major obstacle to U.S. dominance is Europe (including Russia), which, although as yet lacking a coherent project, cannot continue its dependent relationship vis a vis the US. China, however, may be a more significant force in the long run, provided it can resist the temptation--pushed by a segment of its ruling class--to join with the U.S. and Europe in hopes of becoming an equal partner. This, says Amin, is naïve and foolish. The U.S. will not let this happen. It will force China into the role of comprador capitalism, a "new periphery" without control of top technology, finance, military or media. China should instead participate in Afro-Asian solidarity. Amin now grants that "market socialism" may constitute a first phase of the long transition to socialism. He also insists [rightly in my mind] that the agrarian question is the central question for China right now. He claims that the struggle for socialism is still ongoing in China, but will be lost "the day the Chinese system abandons the right of all its peasants to land."

I then gave a summary of my paper, which argues that from the perspective of success-system theory, we can see that China was right to introduce the market, may well be right to have encouraged the development of an entrepreneurial capitalist class, should deepen workplace democracy and keep control of investment. It should guard against the real danger posed by the capitalist class, and avoid becoming capitalist. I argue further that there can be no "Beijing Consensus" as a set of policy prescriptions for other poor countries to follow, since what was possible in China was possible only because of the Chinese Revolution, which broke the power of the old landowning and capitalists classes.

Arif Dirlik's presentation (and paper) was (is) an elegant dissection of Ramo's pamphlet. [Ramo was no longer present, having departed after the morning session.] Ramo's breathless praise of Chinese innovation is a "Silicone Valley Model of Development." His second point stressing equity and sustainability is barely developed and is in conflict with the first part of the paper--and with much of Chinese reality. The last part of the paper is more promising, on China's concern for self-determination, Dirlik hopes that China might participate in a "Bandung for the Age of Global Capitalism. In doing so, it must maintain its commitment of socialism.

Thomas Heberer, of the University of Duisberg-Essen, gave a fine presentation, "China's Development--Seven Hypotheses." He proposed that 1) China's political system is in an "adaptation" phase characterized by a decline in ideology, a rise of new social forces that require the Party to redefine its role, the emergence of a new technical-managerial elite, a critical intelligentsia as well as new associations that demand participation and influence; 2) it is a "fragmented authoritarianism"--one country, a thousand systems; 3) it is a developmental, purposeful state; 4) it is characterized by political pragmatism now aiming, not at far-off communism but at a not-too-distant "harmonious society;" 5) the central leadership possesses trust and legitimacy; 6) Chinese nationalism is not an aggressive nationalism, but serves an integrative, modernizing function; 7) it is an "authoritarian communitarianism" that is trying to get more citizenship participation.

The abstract of Zhu Guang-lei's paper was roughly translated and the presentation difficult to follow. Zhu urges a prudently optimistic attitude toward reforms, a balance between economic and political reforms, gradualism, sticking to the socialist road. He disagrees with Heberer's claim that China's current goal of a harmonious society has strong affinities with Confucianism.

Yu Jincheng argues that a modernization of Marxism entails the recognition that backward countries must take the lead in developing socialism and that they must use the market to do so. He is strongly supportive of the notion of a "harmonious society" as an economic model of development. A modernized Marxism rejects the notion that capitalism is about to collapse. [I think that was his point.]

A speaker added whose name I didn't get gave a rather critical appraisal of Chinese development, arguing that China is not making money with its manufacturing, that education and health care are failing. He wonders how to avoid the alliance between money and politics.

Zhuang Junju gave a sympathetic account of Ramo's paper, though he claims that the Beijing Consensus can't replace the Washington Consensus, but it is important nonetheless. He points out that China still has huge problems: high energy consumption, environmental pollution, polarization between urban and rural areas, an aging problem, and a political system in need of reform.

As a respondent Joseph Fewsmith defended the Washington Consensus, arguing that Chinese reforms fit that consensus. It has privatized 75% of its economy; it is now 70% dependent on exports. He grants that the WC was implemented too quickly in some places, but it is basically solid.

The discussion period that followed as not very fruitful. Each of the presenters, eight of us, were given an opportunity to respond. I did little more than repeat my basic claims, namely that there is a better way than capitalism, that the Chinese reforms were possible because an entrenched capitalist class was absent, and that China, though confronted still with massive problems, can accomplish something important for humanity.

We have dinner at the Center for International Exchange, then are driven back to the hotel. I take a walk around the block afterwards, passing a huge bronze statue of a bull. I stop for awhile to watch the cars and bicycles and listen to the din of insects, cicada-like creatures swarming all over. I return to the hotel, take nap, then read over many of the papers that have been, and will be, given. I was particularly impressed by Sunanda Sen's paper, an older Indian woman, a former Economics Professor at J. Nehru University in New Delhi.

Tues, Aug 9: Conference in morning; overnight train to Shenyang

I skip breakfast, as I did the day before, knowing that there would be coffee-tea break and much other food during the day. Thus van picks us up at 8. The conference resumes at 8:30.

Ma Depu argues the need for a strong, powerful government. Democracy remains a basic value, but this should not undermine the strength of the government. He is skeptical of the necessity for multi-party elections, since that would promote conflicts among nationalities.

Sunanda Sen summarizes her outstanding 41p paper, which gives the clearest picture I've seen as to the structure of Chinese finance. Enterprises are financed overwhelmingly by banks (and not by stock markets), the latter being carefully regulated, so as to keep investments flowing into the real economy. She argues that China is a huge exporter, but a huge importer as well, and so a locomotive for growth for the Third World. It not a typical export-led growth economy, but an instance of state-led industrialization. The market does not control investment. The state does. Banks are functionally segregated (as they used to be in the U.S.). There is little foreign bank presence.

Gregory Chin, of the University of Toronto, but now working for the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, gave a nice paper arguing that China's accession to the WTO is promoting greater transparency, which everyone must acknowledge as a good. The challenges are great, but China has been striving diligently and with great success at meeting them. (This too was a long paper, some 27pp, lots of detailed information.) In his presentation Chin also noted Jeffrey Sack's contention that China has a lot to offer the poorest of the poor--among other things lessons in education, gender equality and health care (China's anti-malaria program best in the world).

Feng Tongqing's paper, "China's Experience: A Research on Enterprise Governance and Workers' Participation" is quite interesting. Feng and several other researcher, including Anita Chan (Australian National University) conducted in-depth case studies of eight enterprises, a mix of state-owned under reform, collective, private and joint-ventures with respect to "Staff and Workers Representative Councils" and trade unions. The former councils were present in six of the eight firms. All had trade unions. Their conclusions are positive: these elements, even if previously inactive, can be important vehicles for enhancing democratic management and protecting workers' right.

Cai Tuo gave the final presentation, emphasizing that "the China model" developed in response to particular circumstances; it represents one model of socialism; it can respect other ways of existence. He asks if we can now talk about human rights. He argues that democracy must be integrated into socialism.

During the discussion I make reference to Sen's paper and Feng's as support for Economic Democracy, and argue that Sen's paper in particular decisively refutes Fewsmith's contention that China has followed the Washington Consensus. I remark that little has been said at the conference regarding the peasant question, which seems to me

central to China's development. Sen responds by distancing herself from my remark, saying that there is not "social control of investment," that investment is for the purpose of industry only.

Following lunch, I take a nap, then spent an hour or so roaming about the neighborhood, noting the wide streets, their non-parallel placement, the many bicycles. I stop by a "Foreign Language Bookstore" which has little other than English--including a nice dual-language book on Oprah Winfrey. I check out the local McDonalds, which is clean and bright. As I leave I'm greeted in English by someone whose job it is to do so.

I'm picked up at the hotel by one of our translators, Ye Ping. We take a cab to the train station. She takes me through a special waiting room, which, for a fee, allows you to board early. The ticket to Shenyang is lowest class, costs only \$12 (for a ten-hour journey). I am booked into a top bunk in a six-bunk, open compartment. My fear of missing my stop is allayed. A note is given to the conductor. One of my compartment companions is asked to look out for me. The system itself is solid: passengers give their tickets to the conductor, who gives them metal receipts. Before arrival, the conductor checks with you, exchanges your receipt for your ticket again.

It was hot. The car was not air-conditioned. There was a fan, but without a visible switch that came on and off from time to time. Vendors came aboard before departure, selling food, but I didn't need any. I sat by the window for awhile, reading, then climbed to my bunk, read some more, then went to sleep.

The trip went smoothly. I slept more or less well. I was already awake when the young woman so charged checked on me, then the conductor.

Wed, Aug 10: The train arrives on time, 5:30 a.m. I make my way out of the station, and stand waiting, hoping that someone will show up. I don't have too long to wait. Li Qian (whose English name is Jackie), a graduate student who will serve as my interpreter, and Kwan Li, a colleague of Menrong's whom I met in Beijing, had gone to the platform, but we had missed each other. I'm informed that Mengrong is ill, and has had to go to the hospital for some injections. I'm taken to a dorm room at the Liaoning Province Collage of Politics and Economics, a suite of rooms, really--living room, bedroom and bath. The bedroom is pleasantly air-conditioned. I then have breakfast with Jackie and Kwan Li in a private dining room, near the cafeteria in the main administration building.

After breakfast I meet Deng Quan Guo, the Vice-Rector (?) of the College, who, with Jackie, takes me to the Shenyang headquarters of the All-China Federation of Labor, where I meet with various officials, to discuss democratic management in China. They give the official view, that by law, all state-owned enterprises have worker councils. I asked about the problem I had discovered recently and written about in my paper, namely Managerial Buyouts, and the temptation of managers to sabotage worker-ownership so that the can become sole owners. I mentioned Larry Lang's scathing critique if MBOs last year, which I'd only recently heard about. It was difficult to carry on a real

conversation, but Jackie told me afterwards that they had said I was clearly an expert who asked the right questions.\

After lunch and a rest, Jackie and our driver Xo took me first to Gugong Palace, the Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty before it moved to Beijing, then to Dongling Park, where Nurhachi, the first Ching emperor is buried.

Kang Rui Hua, a colleague and friend of Mengrong, whom I had also met in Paris, joins us for dinner. We are to go to the ballet that evening. Mengrong is still too ill-disposed to join us.

The ballet is quite nice, a mix of sets, some Western classical, others Chinese. The setting is quite nice, a new theater in downtown Shenyang.

Needless to say, I'm exhausted by the end of the evening. I get a good night's sleep.

Thurs, Aug 11: Visit to Tiexi district

After breakfast I go with Jackie to the pick-up point near the University gate. Mengrong is there. She's feeling better. We are to be given a tour of the Tiexi District by the Liu Bin, the Deputy Governor of the district. The sizable entourage includes Derrick Du, who will serve as my translator. Derrick studied for some time in England, so his English is fine.

I had expected Tiexi to be dismal. Shortly after Mengrong left Chicago, I read, in the New Left Review, a long review of Wang Bing's nine-hour documentary, "West of the Tracks," about the district. It was a rave by Lu Xinyu, calling it one of the best documentaries of the new century, which documents the collapse of heavy industry in the district that had been China's industrial heartland and the fate of the workers there. It's a dismal portrait. I sent Mengrong a copy.

I was astonished by what I saw. Teixi has been given considerable administrative autonomy. A million people live there. In the space of three years the old factories had been torn down (most of them), some relocated to eastern part of the city where an industrial enterprise zone had been created, which has attracted some 40b RMB in investment, some 1600 enterprises, including 83 multinationals, 25 of which are among the top 1000 in the world. The place looks great. Trees have been planted everywhere. A beautiful park has been built around a large lake. New housing for workers is being built--nice looking complexes springing up all over the western part of the district. Commercial enterprises are now flourishing in this area also, which had very few before.

After our tour, we are taken to the administrative headquarters where the facts and figures are given. Some 300,000 workers had lost their jobs. Almost all have been re-employed, many skilled workers in the new factories, some 130,000 in the commercial sector, 5000 new government workers. 1.2 million trees have been planted. The new enterprises are

much cleaner than the old. (One official remarked that in the old days a white shirt would be grey by afternoon.) There is also a technical university in the district, one of the best in China, graduating 30,000 skilled workers/year.

Following the discussion, there was a luncheon banquet--where there was a great deal of toasting, and a lot teasing of Jackie and Derrick. We were then shown a video. It was in Chinese, so I didn't understand much, but amazingly, the first half used the footage from the Wang Bing documentary. The before and after visual contrast is overwhelming. As I said later in the van, had I not seen it, I wouldn't have believed such a transformation possible. (There was not a hint of this transformation in the NLR review, which ends on a bleak note. Wang Bing is quoted, "I would very much like to affirm the value of life, but confronted with the reality of it, I feel so powerless that I become more and more skeptical." The essay ends by discussing the final moments of the film, a train passing through the evening snow. "It is the twilight before history is clarified. As it journeys on through this ambiguity, to what kind of future is the train taking us.")

After the video we are loaded into the van (along with a camera crew) and taken for tour of two state-owned factories, the "Blower Group," and the "Heavy Machinery Division." In the first case the CEO gives me the tour. In the second, the chief Party official does so. I confess, I feel a bit like a head-of-state as I walk about with the entourage, the center of attention. Both enterprises are large, the latter having a dozen or so buildings. In both large machine components are being built. During the tour, I saw the only Westerner I saw in Shenyang, someone from the "Fuller Company," a U.S. firm that had ordered something from the Heavy Machinery Division.

We returned to headquarters and had a discussion. The workforce at Blower has declined from 5000 to 2600 since 1993, whereas sales have increased 10-fold. There is a Worker Council at Blower, which has about 150 representatives and meets once a year. The Council has various committees which also meet. The CEO is appointed by Tiexi government.

Following another banquet and a brief rest, I returned to the Xiexi District to watch a "Chinese opera." This was a much more popular form of entertainment than the ballet, more like vaudeville. People brought their dinners, or bought food. We were ushered into a private box--Kang Rui Hua, our driver Mr. Xo, and my new translator, a young faculty member Jiang Wei (Carrie)--who looks strikingly like Aunt Midge. Mengrong joined us a bit late.

There were many acts, but all followed the same format. A young man would come on stage and do a monologue that would involve acrobatics and often some singing. He would then be joined by a young woman, who would engage in repartee, and would also sing. There was also a small band present.

Even though I couldn't understand a word, the acts were quite enjoyable. The first in particular involved an acrobatic feat that was simply unbelievable. The young man stood

on a chair, on one foot, raised his other foot and locked it behind his neck, then--fell sideways off the chair, maintaining his split position, foot still behind his head. From that position, split on the floor, he continued to sing.

Friday, Aug 12: Xinbin

After breakfast Xo drove Mengrong, Jiang Wei and me to Xinbin, the origin the the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The drive took several hours. I was surprised by the absence of villages. Although a country of 1.3b, the area through which we drove seemed more like Indiana--including the corn fields. It was explained to me during the drive that the Ching dyanasty began in Xinbin, but the capital was moved to Shenyang, and then, following the fall of the Ming Dynasty, to Beijing (in 1644). The Qings were Manchus. They had succeeded the Mings, who where Han, who had themselves succeeded the Mongols--Ghegis and Kubla Khan, the latter ruling during Marco Polo's visit in the 13th century. (Khan, I was told, simply means "emperor" in Mongolian.) (I later learned that the Jesuits appeared during the Ming Dynasy, Matteo Ricci arriving at Macao in 1582, but reached their peak influence during the reign of the Qing emperor Kangxi (1661-1722), but then declined when the Pope sided with other Catholic missinaries against them during the "Rites Controversy"--the Jesuits allowing for too much incorporation of Chinese rituals into Catholicism.)

We arrived in Xinbin, a lovely historical park. There were very few visitors. We found a small restaurant, and ate lunch. Afterwards I bought two little things for Lauryn--a Chinese doll and a little birdhouse--wind chimes, with two birds that chirped when the birdhouse moved with the switch turned on. We then visited tombs of the father, grandfather and three other ancestors of Neurhatchi. We then went to the old Imperial City. We visit a exhibition consisting of a huge mural snaking along the walls of several buildings, depicting the history of the Qing Dynasty. We also entered a "typical peasant house," still occupied. This was quite fascinating. The hut consisted of three rooms, a central kitchen with two bedrooms, one on either side. The kitchen had a low fireplace in each corner, for cooking, but the heat was drawn into the bedrooms, beneath the raised beds on each wall by external chimneys at the four corners of the hut. Thus the beds were always heated, though the house itself would get quite cold.

On the way back Mengrong spoke of her husband, in response to Jiang Wei's inquiry. His day proceeds by the clock, said, getting up at 5 a.m., reading to 6, etc. I asked if he'd been affected only physically by his stroke. Jiang Wei said yes, but Mengrong corrected her. "His brain was broken." She laughed as she talked, but it was not an easy laugh. She also talked about her son, who is studying architecture in Denmark.

We arrived back in Shenyang, and proceeded to a very popular restaurant, packed with people on three floors. Rather than ordering from a menu, one went to the first floor, where sample dishes were laid out for your inspection. A person with hand-held devise accompanied you as you made your selection--that could include a selection of fish, shell-fish and turtles that were still alive. I ordered a chili-pepper and boiled peanut dish,

a delicious pork dish and I forget what else. (Jiang Wei and I made the selection.) We drank beer. It was very nice.

Sat, Aug 13: My last day--a heavy-work day.

Jackie joined Carrie and me for breakfast. We then went, first to meet Mengrong in her office, then to a meeting room in the Administration Building. I made a presentation to college faculty, giving an overview of my work using the diagram Marx (Critique of Capitalism) → Economic Democracy → Marx (Historical Materialism) → Successor-system Theory → Marx (Globalization) → China → Marxism for the 21st Century. Under "China" I referred to a) the question of capitalism under socialism, b) the question of the peasantry, and c) the question of modernity. Under "Marxism for the 21st Century" I pointed to three questions: 1) What is capitalism? 2) What is socialism? 3) What is modernity/post-modernity. The discussion was lively, going beyond the two hours that had been set aside. The talk and discussion was carried on for the most part without translation. One very interesting question, from Prof. Guo, chair of the Philosophy Department. He asked about my family background and how that had contributed to my intellectual interests and positions. I suddenly realized: quite a lot.

Lunch, a short break, then another presentation, this one to a group of graduate students and young faculty. This time I spoke of Marx's democratic critique of capitalism, which points to workplace democracy, social control of investment and allows for the market. I then talked about what is missing in Marx: the entrepreneur, the possibility of some capitalism under socialism, and the peasantry. I concluded with some thoughts on Marxism and Democracy--stressing that what we have in the U.S. is not real democracy. Again the discussion was lively. It was carried on without a translator, most of the students and young faculty fluent enough in English to understand.

A final banquet, this time attended by a high-ranking Party official (I think the chief of the Propaganda Bureau in Shenyang) who had just returned from the border of North Korea. He was a large, aggressive, very masculine guy, who was continually clinking my glass, then chugging his. I declined to enter what seemed to be a drinking contest, since I wanted to remain sober. He was born in 1949. I thought about my early memories of the Korean War. I talked about our deep fear of communism--and how strange it is, our sitting here together.

I returned to my room, packed up, then set off with Jackie and Mengrong for the train station. The ticket this time was about \$30--a first class compartment, air conditioned, two sets of bunk beds, a door that closed and locked. And, I found out the next morning, complimentary tooth brushes in the washroom. Jackie had accompanied us to the compartment. I gave her an Italian farewell and told her, truthfully, that she had been delightful. (I had given her my copy of Xinran's *The Good Women of China* and asked her to email me her impression. I also asked her to pass the book onto Mengrong and to Jiang Wei.)

A woman and her sixteen-year-old son shared our compartment. We talked for awhile, the boy's English being quite good. The train set out at 11, on time. We arrived in Beijing at 7:30 the next morning. I slept well.

Sun, Aug 14: Homeward bound

We were met at the train station by Mengrong's sister, Shengrong, and her son (who I believe is also sixteen). We drove to a downtown shopping district that was now a pedestrian mall. We parked in an underground parking garage (the first I'd seen in China), then looked for a Chinese breakfast place. We found one, a Chinese fast-food place that was packed, even on a Sunday morning. We had a nice breakfast, then went shopping for gifts to take home. We went to a store specializing in Chinese goods. I bought a blouse for Patsy and various things for Lauryn: a blouse and matching pants and a fan. (I bought one for Carrie also.) Mengrong bought her a Chinese kite.

We then took a stroll through one of Beijing's largest (and oldest) department stores--which could have been Marshall Fields. Indeed, this whole section of Beijing could have been in any large American or European city.

We headed for airport, stopping briefly in an old, historic section of Beijing, where we visited a bookstore, and, outside, I purchased a cute "dancing puppet" apparatus for Lauryn (for 5 yuan).

Mengrong and her sister helped me get my ticket and then find the gate. They couldn't go through security. I gave Mengrong a hug, then left. She had been quite wonderful.

In the airport I looked for something for Karen, finally settling on a silk blouse.

The flight to Newark was uneventful--though I watched a nice film, "Fever Pitch," that I want to rent for Patsy. The flight from Newark to Chicago was delayed for six hours. I called home--and learned that Karen's thyroid biopsy had come back positive. Unsettling news. I read most of the rest of China Reflected, that Huang Ping had given me. I collected my luggage at O'Hare at 1:30 a.m. Patsy was waiting for me outside. Just arrived. A perfect ending to a wonderful trip.