

# Ottawa member celebrates 30th anniversary of Beijing People's Friendship Association

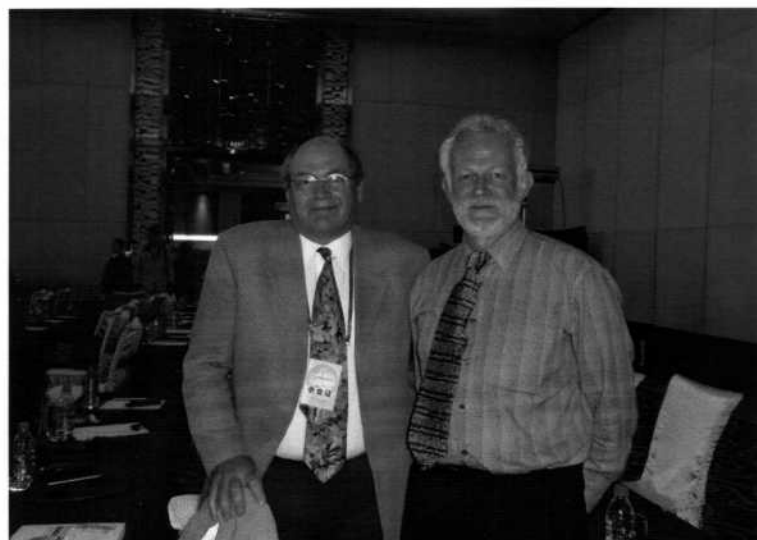
Gary Levy  
CCFS-O delegate to Beijing Friendship Forum

In September I joined 100 foreign delegates from 20 countries in Beijing to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

The workshops were the most interesting part of the conference. Some focused on what their associations were doing. For example the New Zealand Friendship Society has taken up the work of Rewi Alley, who established co-operatives in western China during the 1930s and continues to support these by providing money (with help from the NZ government) and expertise. The Society also recognizes Kathleen Hall who worked with Dr. Bethune with a \$1500 scholarship that allows girls from rural areas to become public health nurses.

Politics was mostly absent from the conference although one Chinese keynote speaker suggested the world was on a path toward peace, friendly development and co-operation with China at the forefront, contrasting it with the United States emphasis on military solutions. A few American delegates felt this mild rebuke was uncalled for, but discussions with individual delegates left no doubt the Chinese approach to international affairs had more support among delegates than the more ideological American one.

Not all workshop speakers represented friendship associations. Americans put considerable emphasis on academic exchanges and not just at the university level. The Greek delegate described



Gary Levy (left) with Dave Bromwich, Vice President of the China-New Zealand Friendship Society compare notes at Beijing Conference.

a project bringing together Greek and Chinese philosophers to produce a book on Socrates and Confucius. The Belgian delegate explained his philosophy of international goodwill through walking. The Norwegian delegate spoke about Taichi which she had been teaching for 28 years.

At first I thought these interventions rather off topic but by the end I understood how flexible the Chinese are in attracting people sympathetic to China. The real lesson of the conference was that the potential for future projects is limitless.

## Book review: "Why the West Rules—For Now" by Ian Morris

Peter Larson  
McLelland & Stewart, 2010, 726 pp.

The Chinese invented many things, including gunpowder, the compass and printing, yet when Western civilization clashed with the Chinese civilization in the mid 1800's, China was weak and backward and the West quickly dominated.

Why was China so far behind the West when the colonial powers arrived there? Was China always behind? Will China move ahead in the future?

Stanford professor of Classics and History Ian Morris has set out to study why the West is on top – today – and how long it might stay that way.

His book is a monster. It is encyclopedic and radical. He argues that the archaeological evidence indicates that since the last ice age, all human civilizations have follow more or less the same developmental trajectory. But, because of favourable geographic

and climatic conditions, Western civilization arose in southern Turkey 2000 years before similar human development evolved in China.

Morris argues that the West kept this developmental lead until the fall of the Roman Empire (around 500 A.D.), at which time Europe fell backward and while China's standard of living and organization moved ahead of most of Europe. But Europe's mastery of coal and steam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century allowed Europe to leap-frog ahead and impose its will on the middle kingdom.

According to Morris, the West's lead is neither inevitable nor insurmountable. On the contrary, he cites lots of evidence to indicate that China is about to break back into the lead and out-strip western civilization.

Morris book is not an easy read. It is 750 pages of archaeology, history and economics. However, for those interested in what the 21<sup>st</sup> century will look like, his book is very rewarding.