

also attached their rising star to the project. The second part of this essay, describing

imbalances in China, evidenced by the transportation of fossil fuels 1,000 kilometres down the Yangtze.⁸ The dam also offers secondary advantages including improved Yangtze navigation and water diversion. For instance, the dam will reduce river transport costs from Wuhan to Chongqing by 35 to 37 per cent.⁹ It will also channel water to the water deficient North China Plain.¹⁰

The principle appeal of the dam, however, remains economic development. Modernising China's industries has long been a priority for its leaders, ever since the mid-nineteenth century; indeed, the exploitation of natural resources dates back millennia to (water management projects).¹¹ Only by detailing these early precedents can the

three such ventures, Mao swam the Yangzi at Wuhan. To many his triumph over the river symbolised the desire of the CCP to transform the natural environment. Mao's poem of the same year hinted that a dam should be made over the Yangzi to complement the newly-constructed bridge:

‘... Walls of stone will stand upstream to the west
To hold back Wuhan's clouds and rain,
Till a smooth lake rises in the narrow gorges.
The mountain goddess if she is still there
Will marvel at a world so changed.’¹⁴

Though Mao never lived to see the dam constructed, CCP policy reflected his

Large-scale dam projects offered one way to meet such targets.²⁰ During the GLF these dam projects ‘became more than just another kind of construction

year early, 'so as to turn 1997 into a year of double celebration! [Hong Kong would also be returned to China in that year]'.²⁹

The symbolism of the TGO also extends from the state to the individual. While the Leap became a catch-cry for Mao's political personae and fortunes, the TGP serves the same purpose for Li Peng. With the failure of Mao's 'pet' project came temporary political setback. Li possibly fears a similar fate were the TGP to fail, particularly after he significantly raised the political stakes of the TGP higher by touting the dam 'as a symbol of self-reliance and diplomatic defiance' soon after the 1989 Tiananmen Square repression.³⁰

As section three demonstrates, the TGP 'is a state-sponsored construction project of unusual importance' one therefore above the 'scrutiny of the country's environmental laws.'³¹ Its importance clearly lies beyond the fact of economic development, improved navigation or flood control. The TGP has become symbolic of China's historical quest for modernisation, reflecting the mind-set of the CCP and its confidence in the ability of science to subdue nature for the benefit of communism, though, as the next section

reveals such a view had its ops

Until the NPC discussed the project many commentators had regarded the body as there to rubber stamp projects.³³ The congress, in fact, displayed a significant amount of opposition. In 1986 a report signed by one tenth of members favoured postponing the TGP until next century.³⁴ In 1992 even after the project had been approved 'about a third of deputies registered reservations'.³⁵ Dam supporters overcame such opposition through established bargaining techniques, which had developedGkkBjL'xsG'j'kBKsmury.

neighbouring Hunan.⁴⁰ The CCP wooed officials by providing guided tours of the proposed TGP site, while barring those who opposed the dam.⁴¹ With the overt support of Premier Li Peng to back them, dam lobbyists hurried through the crucial 1992 NPC that was to decide the TGP's fate, hoping that speed and lack of information about the project would result in its successful resolution.⁴² At the key 1992 NPC, protagonists helped to ensure the approval of the council by barring delegates from exchanging information.⁴³ In these negotiations dam supporters presented the project as a Chinese Manifest Destiny. Politicians bolstered their own position by citing the support of Mao and Deng Xiaoping for the dam.⁴⁴ China's former President, Jiang Zemin exemplified such boosterism: 'The age-old dream of the Chinese people to develop and utilize the resources of the Three Gorges of the

The TGP thus offers a clear case study of how specialists ‘mine, manipulate and massage data to support or refute contradictory technical opinions concerning the project’s viability.’⁴⁹ To maintain a pro-dam scientific discourse the CCP loaded TGP committees with dam protagonists and barred dissenters. Of some four hundred and twelve experts sitting on the Leading Group for the Assessment of the Three Gorges Project, only one, an enthusiastic TGP supporter, was an engineer.⁵⁰ Protagonists also overlooked many leading specialists like hydrologist Huang Wanli and environmental protection advisor Huang Shunxing because it was known they held anti-dam views.⁵¹

the CG began an adroit propaganda exercise.⁵⁵ The official view recognised that, though ‘an arduous task’, those relocated ‘will be guaranteed a happy and peaceful life, free of poverty.’⁵⁶ Officials promised relocated settlers prepared agricultural and housing land, a new job in their old trade and financial compensation.⁵⁷ According to official sources, peasants could also take note of model resettled villages such as Honggguang (Wanxian County), praised ‘for achieving a moderate level of prosperity.’⁵⁸ As section three demonstrates, resettlement did not prove as smooth or as easy as promised.

Alongside such inducements, proponents of the TGP emphasised how the dam would protect people from devastating floods and how it was in the national interest of the country. President of the China Three Gorges Project Development Corporation, Lu Younmei, asserted that had the dam ‘already been completed, the problems of flood control would have already been solved’, the devastation of the 1998 Yangtze flooding in 1998 averted.⁵⁹ Protagonists continued to argue that the dam was crucial for national development and, in the atmosphere of suppression following the pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square, quashed dissent. A nationalist rhetoric enabled protagonists to associate supporters ‘with the power and the glory of the Chinese state’ and to brand opponents as unpatriotic conspirators trying to infiltrate Chinese culture with Western values.⁶⁰

Initially, this technique seemed to be successful. Non-CCP studies reinforced the observation made by a Fengjie businessman that ‘Though personally I am not looking forward to moving ... I am all for the project. Anything that I lose is nothing compared to what the country will gain.’⁶¹ Similarly, an independent study found that sixty seven per cent of villagers in Qigang were ‘willing to move in the national interest.’⁶² A recent survey supports this claim: 61 per cent of 470 migrant householders believed they would benefit from the dam building. As section three illustrates the

⁵⁵ Smith, p.394 provides a lower estimate of the

nationalistic ‘unity’ fomented by the CCP has been undermined by a series of rural environmental protests.⁶³

Favourable propaganda helped foment support for the dam. In late 1991 Chinese newspapers carried pro-TGP publicity.⁶⁴ This contrasted with the CG’s banning of the anti-dam publication, *Shiye* (Stone), in 1989 and the imprisonment of its editor, Dai Qing, who had also been involved in the Tiananmen protests.⁶⁵ *Shiye* typified the growth of protest against the dam up to 1989. Its author was denounced in official media and arrested. (Her powerful patron, General Ye Jianying, however, effected her release.⁶⁶) Many other protesters were not so lucky, as the CCP repression of the pro-democracy Tiananmen Square movement enabled TGP protagonists to silence most critics.⁶⁷

The CCP used these methods because it feared that environmental protest could undermine the regime. Indeed, as Richard Louis Edmonds notes, ‘Once an environmental movement has been successfully established to fight one issue, it tends to gain momentum and often becomes the focus for political dissension.’⁶⁸ With the Tiananmen pro-democracy protest occurring concomitantly with the publication of Dai Qing’s *Shiye*, and with suggestions that the 1989 NPC attack on Li Peng’s TGP had fuelled the Tiananmen protest, this political dissension was precisely what the CCP leadership feared.⁶⁹ Dai Qing had stated in *Shiye* that she did not consider herself an environmentalist. Rather, she and her colleagues’ aim ‘was to push China a little bit further towards freedom of speech on the issue of government decision making.’⁷⁰

To add to these concerns the recent collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrated to the CCP the danger of spontaneous movements and the need to suppress such organisations. In the Soviet Union, much as with the increase in free press in China before 1989, censorship relaxed and allowed public opinion to influence controversial environmental projects. Many Soviet citizens bordering the Aral Sea, a vast landlocked sea in Central Asia, for instance, criticised their leadership for polluting and draining this body of water.⁷¹ Ethnic dissatisfaction, fuelled by economic and environmental

⁶³ Li Heming, Paul Waley and Phil Rees, ‘Reservoir Resettlement in China: past experience and the Three Gorges Dam’, *China Water & Forestry*, 167, 3 (September, 2001), p.202.

⁶⁴ He and Si, p.29.

⁶⁵ Xiao Rong, ‘The Banning of *Shiye*’, *China Water & Forestry*, p.13.

⁶⁶ For a brief biography of Dai Qing’s remarkable life, see Geramie Barmé, ‘Enemy of the People’, *China Water & Forestry*, (August 10, 1989), pp.29-30.

⁶⁷ Edmonds, p.80.

⁶⁸ Edmonds, p.245.

⁶⁹ Ryder and Barber, ‘Damming’, p.14.

⁷⁰ Dai Qing, ‘The Struggle to Publish *Shiye* in China’, *China Water & Forestry*, p.8.

⁷¹ Timur Pulatov, ‘Those Who Run Ahead of the Cart – Reflections on Problems Between Nationalities, in *China Water & Forestry*, 40, (1988), p.8.

mismanagement, became focused around this environmental issue, a situation

According to a report published by

It also demonstrates the way Gaoyang's citizens framed their protest in

concluded the e-mail, 'can the quality of projects be assured.'⁹⁵ Likewise, as Daniel Lynch demonstrates, the effects of market deregulation, technological reform and administrative fragmentation have undermined official Chinese 'thought work'. It is no longer possible for the CCP to monopolise broadcasting, nor for it to control what its people listen to. Though he characterises China as an increasingly pluralistic society, willing and able to tune into Western media or purchase consumer products, this has not resulted in the accompanying economic and social changes which have led to political freedom and the emergence of a definitive civil society (a situation Lynch terms public-sphere praetorianism). Rather, the reality is a cacophony of different voices drowning each other out. Were the economy to fall into recession, Lynch warns that the CCP could lose total control over communications and thus plunge the party into a serious political crisis.⁹⁶

a ba gownng With an increasingly dissatisfied, vocal peasantry and declining control over media, the CCP is understandably eager to remove potent

\$57 million US dollars has been stolen from the resettlement relocation fund, almost half of it by a single contractor.¹⁰⁰

To maintain support for the dam, officials have tried to clamp down on corruption by meting out punishment to high-level offenders and addressing smaller outbreaks. On 25 February 2000, for instance, the ‘former director of the district construction bureau in Fengdu received the death sentence...for stealing 12 million yuan’ (\$1.44 U.S. million dollars).¹⁰¹ Some 100 officials have also been indicted on smaller charges of corruption.¹⁰² This has not proved wholly successful, as the case in Gaoyang demonstrates. Anti-corruption activity in Gaoyang is a reminder that the Chinese state

rational environmental policy.’¹⁰⁷ Indeed, some Chinese support the primacy given to modernisation because they believe that environmental degradation is an acceptable cost of economic development.¹⁰⁸ These fears and attitudes explain the vociferousness with which Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, for instance, allegedly ordered a former water resources minister, Li Rui, to stop criticising the dam.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, at a proposal to transfer water south to north, the Yangze River Commission Director urged that ‘everyone’s thinking must now quickly come around to the same view’ about the controversial project.¹¹⁰

The CCP has kept an equally careful check on non-governmental environmental organisations. As a means of controlling potentially troublesome parts of society, the CCP’s policy of monitoring environmental movements is similar to its registration of ethnic groups.¹¹¹ The first of these environmental organisations, Friends of

deliberately shied away from associating themselves with controversial issues such as calls for democracy. Hong Kong environmental groups, similarly, disassociated themselves

meaning and symbolism. What Polo would make of all this were he alive today to visit the TGP is anyone's guess. The practical businessman in him would probably warm to the innumerable ships,