

Voice of Friendship stems from
Shi Jing (Book of Songs).

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People-to-people



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Front Cover: On August 11, 2020, President Lin Songtian meets with Ambassador Parakhat Durdyev of Turkmenistan to China at the CPAFFC.

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Connect five continents and start a new model of people-to-people diplomacy

Lin Songtian, CPAFFC president interviewed by ifeng.com

Hou Mengwei



On July 3, CPAFFC President Lin Songtian gave an exclusive interview to ifeng.com. The interview covered topics on the opportunities and challenges posed by COVID-19

to people-to-people diplomacy and international people-to-people cooperation as well as on the value and importance of culture in fighting the pandemic and other thoughts prompted

by the pandemic.

On the opportunities and challenges faced by people-to-people diplomacy, Lin said that if a country is weak, it has no diplomacy at all, let alone people-to-people diplomacy.

People-to-people diplomacy develops as the country's socioeconomic development and international cooperation progresses. Since it launched the reform and opening-up drive four decades ago, China has made great strides in its development. In recent years especially, it has integrated extensively into the world in multiple areas. It has established a global network of partnerships and a circle of international friends. People-to-people exchanges between China and foreign countries have reached all corners of the globe and covered all sectors of society and have been carried out at various levels.

In 2019, 150 million Chinese traveled abroad as tourists or for exchanges; 145 million foreigners vis-

ited China; more than 5 million people traveled between China and the United States; more than 8 million people traveled between China and Europe; and more than 13 million people traveled between China and Japan.

Lin said it was regrettable that the frequent exchanges conducted over the years have not achieved the affinity and mutual understanding that was anticipated between Chinese and foreign peoples; and we are yet to build a solid social and public-opinion foundation for Sino-foreign friendships.

He noted that some people in the US still cling to a Cold War mentality. Though their bodies are in the 21st century, their way of thinking and their understanding of international relations still lag behind. They do not want to see China develop. To disintegrate and contain China, they call black white and attack China on every possible occasion. Using their dominance in international communications and an overwhelming publicity capacity, they have lied with their eyes open, throwing dirt, shame and pressure on China and creating a hostile environment in international opinion against China and crippling the public and social foundation of China-US friendship. Recently, we can detect hardly any friendship from US media and public opinion. Justice has not been able to contain evil.

Lin said that international public opinion is not in the hands of one or several people. In this world, people with a sense of justice, vision and kindness far outnumber those who have a

dark heart and who are jealous of others who are better off. Justice exists in people's hearts. This is a world full of colors.

Lin said that in the new era people-to-people diplomacy means embracing new opportunities. There is a lot we can do in this regard, he said. Our job will be done in a more substantive way, achieving more practical results and touching people's hearts. Our job is to help the world understand China by reading and listening to our stories. The CPAFFC is willing to mobilize common people's wisdom and strength to promote mutual understanding and affinity between the Chinese people and those from other parts of the world, and to help build a community with a shared future for mankind so that all will live a better life.

On the topic of people-to-people collaboration in fighting COVID-19, Lin said, the pandemic has hindered face-to-face interactions between China and foreign friendly organizations and people; however, our connections, correspondence and friendship will not be severed.

Our solutions outperform the difficulties. Currently, China's 5G technology and new infrastructure construction is developing rapidly, bringing us closer to friends across the globe. Meetings via the cloud and online dialogues are both convenient and economical.

Lin said that in recent months the CPAFFC has been connecting with five continents. A new mode of people-to-people diplomacy has been started via

the cloud. We use the internet, have phone conversations and hold online meetings. Calligraphy, painting and music are part of the content of our communications.

Lin said, we will never forget that when we were having a hard time fighting the pandemic, more than 80 foreign countries and more than 160 friendship cities, along with organizations and individuals, immediately sent us messages of consolation and donated to affected areas in both monetary and material forms. When the pandemic was raging across the globe, we fully utilized people-to-people diplomacy, worked with friendship organizations from other countries and offered soft assistance such as sending letters of sympathy and voicing support in various forms.

To name a few, we invited artists from home and abroad to sing, in the UN's six working languages, a song called *Let the World Be Filled with Love*. Chinese and Iranian dulcimer artists performed online, extolling the joint efforts of the two countries in fighting the pandemic. Short videos were made conveying our best wishes to Russia on its National Day. Young officials and university students from across China who were participants in the Chinese-Japanese-ROK youth exchange program, shot videos encouraging each other to stay strong during this harsh time. We held video conversations with 10 friendship organizations from ASEAN countries and 13 from 12 Latin-American countries. We also

had online conversations with US entrepreneurs in China, anti-pandemic volunteers from China and France and Heinz Fischer, former president of Austria and president of the Austria-China Friendship Association. Today, we have just organized an online exhibition presenting the works of nearly 100 calligraphers from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Lin said, the CPAFFC coordinated the strength of Chinese cities and their friendship cities abroad, as well as Chinese companies and people from all sectors of society, in a timely manner, bringing into full play China's productivity advantages and actively offering large quantities of pandemic prevention and control materials in substantial support of the countries and regions most seriously affected by the pandemic. Wherever they are from, whether developed or developing countries, as long as there is a need we will mobilize all available resources, provide all possible assistance and offer our support in the form of pandemic prevention and control materials.

Lin said we also organized and promoted video meetings between Chinese localities and their foreign counterparts, in which the Chinese participants shared their experiences in fighting the pandemic. These moves enhanced the unity and cooperation of the international community in the joint struggle to conquer the pandemic, which was raging across the globe, and helped safeguard the lives and health of people around the world.

Not long ago, we organized a pandemic prevention and control conference involving the Chinese cities of Wuhan, Fuzhou and Yangzhou, together with the National Mayors Front of Brazil. The Chinese cities shared their experience in pandemic prevention and control and in the resumption of the economy, highlighting the unique role of city diplomacy.

With regard to culture's role and value during the pandemic, Lin said that the most important value of culture is its function in allowing justice to prevail and evil to be punished, encouraging the public to stay morally and emotionally positive, united and progressive, selfless and devoted to the common good. Culture also consolidates peace and harmony among mankind, between man and nature, man and society and among different peoples and countries, promoting national stability, social harmony and world peace and development.

Facing the menace of the pandemic, Lin said, the cultural circles of all nations should tap the potential functions of their culture and use popular forms of cultural activity to help people develop a justifiable concept of values and collective safety, to help people treat the pandemic in a more objective, sensible and scientific way and actively object to actions that politicize the pandemic — such as stigmatizing certain places with regard to the origin of the virus. Bearing in mind people's lives and health, they should encourage people all over the world to be united

in fighting the pandemic.

Lin noted that Chinese civilization has a history of 5,000 years. It originated in China but belongs to the world. Each civilization has its own strong points and its own splendid thoughts. Affinity between peoples is the key to state-to-state relations, while mutual understanding is the key in people-to-people relations. International relations starts and continues based on the interests of the people. People are both the protagonists and objects of people-to-people diplomacy. People-to-people diplomacy works to complete the last mile of state-to-state diplomacy and put it into practice. It serves to strengthen people's sense of gain, happiness and identification and to achieve mutual learning and common prosperity between the Chinese civilization and those of other countries in their exchanges — all with equality and mutual respect.

The CPAFFC will continue to build platforms to support exchanges and cooperation between Chinese people and others around the world, promoting exchanges between civilizations, Lin said. The only possible way to achieve affinity and mutual understanding between people is for them to know each other, love each other, learn from each other and make progress together.

The pandemic, Lin said, requires a global war by humanity against the novel coronavirus. Rapidly spreading across the globe, the virus is posing a serious threat to the lives, health and

security of people from every country and doing serious damage to the world order of life and production. It is having a profound and complex impact on industrial chains, supply chains and value chains, as well as on the pattern of world politics and the balance of power. Different social systems, values, governing institutions and capacity of all countries are being severely tested in an equal, transparent way.

As for the lessons taught by the pandemic to mankind, Lin said, man must learn from nature and pursue harmony with it. Mankind can only conquer the disease if we bear in mind that life and people come first, aided by respect for science, and that all must stand united and work together.

The raging pandemic has taught us in a hard way that the health and destiny of mankind are more closely intertwined with each other than ever before, Lin said. It has been proved that a political virus cannot overcome a natural virus. All of mankind live in a community with a shared future. Nobody can secure his own safety at the cost of others. Nobody can fare well by acting in an unrestrained manner. Political labeling can only open more opportunities for the virus to spread at the cost of others' precious lives.

All countries should set aside differences in nationality, ethnicity, history, culture and social systems, Lin said. They should value lives and people most, respect life, believe in science, stand united and work together to win this war to protect global public health and help build a sense of community and a healthy future for mankind. ■

President Lin Songtian holds a video conference with Markus Ferber, president of the Hans-Seidel-Foundation and a member of the European Parliament

Zhang Ji

On July 8, Lin Songtian, president of the CPAFFC, spoke by video conference with Markus Ferber, president of the Hans-Seidel-Foundation and a member of the European Parliament.

Lin expressed his gratitude to Ferber for the support he and the foundation had provided for the Chinese people's response to COVID-19. He spoke highly of the foundation's 40 years of cooperation with the CPAFFC, as well as its contributions to China's vocational education, rural development and poverty alleviation, especially in the country's western areas, since the foundation was admitted into China as the first German political foundation.

Lin expressed hope for more exchanges between small and medium-sized enterprises, think tanks, media and the youth of the two countries to promote mutual understanding and trust and benefit the two peoples. He invited Ferber to visit China in due course and have a look at Xingxian county in Shanxi province's Lvliang city to learn about China's poverty alleviation achievements. Xingxian was the county designated to be supported by the CPAFFC in its effort to rise from poverty.

Lin said that under the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping, the Communist Party of China and the government at all levels have always

made people's lives and health the top priority. He noted that China has imposed the strictest measures for nationwide prevention and control of the pandemic. With concerted and strenuous efforts, it became the first country to overcome the pandemic, resuming economic activity and reopening schools. The enormous sacrifice made by the Chinese people bought time for the rest of the world to respond to COVID-19. That is a major contribution China has made to the world, he said.

Lin also noted that in the combat against COVID-19, leaders of governments, enterprises and NGOs in China and Germany had reached out to each other without delay, setting an example in the global response to the pandemic. Their successful practices showed the world that COVID-19 is preventable, controllable and curable. The key to victory in this fight is to put people and life first and to respect science, he said.

Also, we should tackle the common challenge imposed on all of humanity with a strong sense of responsibility for people, rather than trying to divert people's attention, scapegoating others, wasting time in making and spreading political viruses, politicizing the pandemic and stigmatizing certain countries at the cost of people's lives. Political viruses can't cure a natural virus. Only solidarity and cooperation can lead to victory against COVID-19.

Lin said that 2020 is the target year for China to eliminate absolute poverty and complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Despite the severe impacts of COVID-19, the country is confident it

will hit its targets. To achieve the goals, President Xi Jinping has ordered timely mobilization and deployment.

The central government and local governments at all levels have been carrying out proactive fiscal and financial policies to cut taxes and fees by a large margin to effectively reduce the production and operating costs for enterprises. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund say that China is likely to be one of the few countries in the world with positive growth this year. The long-term sound fundamentals of China's economic development have not changed and will not change. China remains one of the most popular destinations for foreign investment.

Lin expressed his belief that Chi-

na's development brings opportunities for Germany and Europe. China is an important partner for Europe, not a rival. China and Europe have extensive common interests and see eye to eye on safeguarding world peace and multilateralism, opposing hegemonism, unilateralism and protectionism, and collaborating in mitigating climate change and tackling public health events and other global challenges. Cooperation far outweighs competition.

He talked about the current pandemic situation in Africa as well as the aid China has provided to the continent. He said that because Africa is Europe's natural neighbor, the impacts on Africa's economy from the pandemic will not only cause severe social and political problems on the



continent but could also seriously threaten Europe's security and stability.

The international community should make concerted moves to help Africa control and defeat COVID-19 at an early date to realize stability, growth and prosperity, he said. That is not only in the best interests of Africa, China, Europe and the rest of the world but is also the responsibility of the international community.

Since the end of February, China has been actively leading the global community in sharing its anti-pandemic experience with 54 African countries and donating various relief materials. China has sent 148 medical experts, and provided more than 400 rounds of training about pandemic prevention and control. More than 20,000 medical personnel in Africa have been trained.

China is willing to carry out trilateral cooperation with Germany in Africa, Lin said, which will benefit all sides, and help African countries defeat the pandemic as soon as possible.

Ferber commended China for its tremendous achievements in reform and opening-up over the past 40-plus years. He spoke highly of the CPAFFC for serving as an important bridge in enhancing mutual trust between the people of China and the rest of the world and promoting exchanges and cooperation in economy, culture, science and technology. He said he looked forward to visiting China again for discussions on further cooperation with the CPAFFC and to learn about new developments in Chinese society.

Ferber extolled China's anti-pandemic measures and achievements and agreed with President Xi's vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. He lauded China's sacrifices made in the global fight against COVID-19, which purchased precious time for the world and offered China's solution.

He noted that the Chinese government had taken resolute measures, including the suspension of outbound traffic in Wuhan and stay-at-home quarantines, which effectively blocked the spread of COVID-19. The Chinese people, with a high sense of discipline, unity and cooperation, have shown determination in combating the pandemic, Ferber said, adding that China's successful experience is worth learning by all around the globe. With the pandemic still raging, the international community needs to unite to weather the current difficulties.

Ferber said European countries, including Germany, are concerned about the pandemic in Africa. However, news about the African pandemic have been underreported by the media and may be underestimated in the international community, including Europe, because most of the media attention has been drawn to the United States.

Anti-pandemic collaboration between China and Africa shows that China is a responsible major country and a role model for others, "which we appreciate very much," Ferber said. "Germany would like to help

developing countries in Africa and elsewhere, such as training medical personnel and sharing its experience in the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19."

Ferber said that despite differences in political systems and cultural values, China and Germany have extensive common concerns and interests in facilitating Africa's sustainable development and safeguarding the continent's peace and stability. He agreed with Xi that helping promote Africa's development can propel the development of a community with a shared future for mankind. And so the Hans-Seidel-Foundation would like to pursue trilateral cooperation in Africa together with the CPAFFC, Ferber said.

The two sides had further discussions on deepening bilateral cooperation and covered international and regional issues of common concern.

The Hans-Seidel-Foundation, headquartered in Munich, is one of Germany's six biggest political foundations.

President Lin also answered written questions from the Hans-Seidel-Foundation on China's anti-pandemic efforts, the impacts of COVID-19 on China's economy, the international fight against the coronavirus and collaboration on vaccine research and development. Other topics included China's relations with Germany and the European Union and the enhancement of friendly cooperation between the foundation and the CPAFFC. ■

Carry forward the Asian Spirit and contribute Asian strength to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind

Ai Lin

On July 13, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries held a video meeting with eight South Asian organizations devoted to promoting friendly ties with China. In a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, CPAFFC President Lin Songtian had candid exchanges of ideas on an equal footing with leaders of the friendship organizations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. They reached broad consensus and issued a joint initiative on fighting pandemics, calling on China and South Asian countries to unite and cooperate to fight the coronavirus, jointly push forward the Belt and Road Initiative and contribute Asian spirit, Asian wisdom and Asian strength to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

At the beginning of the meeting, Lin expressed his gratitude to the chiefs of the friendship organizations

for their long-term positive contributions to the development of people-to-people friendship between China and South Asia. He noted that the meeting was being held at a critical moment in the global fight against COVID-19, which once again demonstrates that the friendship between China and South Asia has withstood the test of the changing international situation and highlights the determination and confi-

dence of the two sides to work together in solidarity and cooperation to overcome difficulties.

Lin said the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously threatened the lives, health and safety of people around the world, severely disrupted the world order of production and livelihood, critically impacted the global economy, finance, manufacturing, chains of supply and capital, as well as international re-



lations and the world economic pattern. The impact is destructive beyond people's imagination, Lin said, adding that "it must arouse the attention of governments and people of all countries". Although no scientist in the world has yet been able to reach a definitive conclusion about the source and pathology of coronavirus, Lin said, the pandemic has shown the world that mankind is a community with a shared future and that no country or people is immune.

Lin noted that the successful prevention and control practices in China were showing the world that the virus could be controlled and treated.

"The key," he said, "is to uphold the principle that we should put people first, and respect life and science. Only through unity and cooperation can we win the battle. The political virus cannot cure the natural virus. If we are not highly responsible for the lives, health and safety of our own people and those around the world, and concentrate resources and effort to win the battle against the pandemic, we will only make our own people pay a high price for their lives and endanger others all over the world."

Lin said that in the face of the sudden outbreak of COVID-19, China had worked with the governments and people of South Asian countries in solidarity and cooperation to overcome the difficulties. It effectively contained the spread of the pandemic and maximumly safeguarded people's lives, health and safety in those countries and regions, which, he said, had demonstrated the Asian culture and

spirit of solidarity, mutual assistance, selfless dedication, individual self-discipline, collective security and boundless love. It also set an example for the world in pandemic prevention and control, provided Asian solutions and contributed Asian strength.

Lin said that China and South Asian countries share a common cultural gene and historical experience with a common development mission, and both are committed to regional peace and prosperity and improving people's livelihoods. In recent years, the two sides have shown political trust, benefiting each other in economic and trade relations, learning from each other in culture and assisting each other in security while deepening international cooperation, Lin said.

"I am glad to see that by upholding the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits; dedicating ourselves to the development of better connectivity in policy, infrastructure, trade and financial services; and fostering closer ties between the peoples of various countries, the Belt and Road Initiative has yielded tangible results in South Asia, and made its people the first to benefit. It will surely bring new development opportunities and benefits to countries and people in the region."

Lin said the United States does not want to see a strong China and a prosperous Asia. It willfully lies, stirs up trouble and instigates anti-China sentiment. We must be highly vigilant against ulterior motives of countries

outside the region, he said, adding that we believe the people of Asia have the wisdom and ability to safeguard their own interests, and that friendship organizations of China and South Asia have an obligation and responsibility to make their due contribution to regional peace and prosperity.

Lin indicated that the CPAFFC would like to strengthen cooperation with friendship organizations in South Asian countries and focus on three areas of work — first, to enhance mutual understanding and trust among the people and consolidate public support for friendship between China and South Asia; second, to promote exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation between friendship cities and commit to win-win cooperation for common development; third, to strengthen dialogue on equal footing and firmly uphold international fairness and justice.

Heads of the South Asian organizations friendly with China congratulated Lin on his appointment as president of the CPAFFC and expressed appreciation and thanks to the CPAFFC for hosting the meeting.

Anoop Bhatarrai, president of the Organization for South Asian Regional Friendship and Cooperation with China, expressed his willingness to continue to strengthen cooperation with the CPAFFC and promote more extensive exchanges and cooperation between the two peoples.

Sultan A. Baheen, president of the Afghanistan China Friendship Association, said that as the novel

coronavirus continues to ravage the world, a united response from the international community is needed. He called for people-to-people organizations in various countries to play a unique role in promoting the international community's correct recognition of the virus and to develop information sharing and strengthen volunteer services.

Altaf Choudhury, president of the Bangladesh-China Cultural, Economic & Mass Communication Center, emphasized that the 21st century is the Asian century. He said he firmly believed that the Belt and Road Initiative put forward by President Xi Jinping will benefit the people of South Asia and the rest of the world for common development.

George Fernandes, president of the India China Friendship Association, thought that the coronavirus had seriously affected the economic and social development of the world. Only through unity and cooperation and sharing experience in fighting the pandemic can countries finally win the battle, he said.

Mohamed Rasheed, chairman of China-Maldivian Cultural Association, said he believed that all countries should learn from China and give top priority to safeguarding people's lives, health and safety. China is the true friend of the Maldives, he said.

Rajendra Nakarmi, secretary-general of the Nepal-China Executive Council, said the unity and mutual assistance in fighting the pandemic by the Chinese and Nepalese people

had further deepened the profound friendship between the two peoples that has lasted for generations.

Farwa Zafar, secretary-general of the All Pakistan China Friendship Association, said that in the fight against the pandemic, Pakistan had always stood firmly with the Chinese people and demonstrated through concrete action the connotation of the era of China-Pakistan community of shared future.

Indrananda Abeysekera, president of the Association for Sri Lanka China Social Land Cultural Cooperation, said that since the outbreak of the pandemic various parts of China have donated anti-pandemic materials to Sri Lanka. It is hoped that both sides will continue to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in the field of public health and promote the building of a community of human health.

Foreign attendees at the meeting agreed that the friendship organizations of all countries should join hands to firmly uphold multilateralism, fairness and justice and resolutely oppose hegemonism, unilateralism and protectionism, so as to jointly make due contributions to the prosperity and development of the region and the fundamental interests of its people.

In conclusion, Lin said that peace, stability and prosperity in Asia not only conforms to the fundamental interests of the people in the region but also to the common interests of the people around the world. He said he believes that the people of China and South Asia have the wisdom and ability to

set a new example for the prosperity and development of Asia and the maintenance of world peace.

Following is the full text of Joint Initiative of Chinese and South Asian Friendship Organizations

Fighting Together for a Beautiful Dream

We, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), the Organization for South Asian Regional Friendship and Cooperation with China, Afghanistan-China Friendship Association, Bangladesh-China Cultural Economic and Mass Communication Center, India China Friendship Association (Maharashtra), China-Maldivian Cultural Association, Nepal-China Executives Council, All-Pakistan China Friendship Association, and Association for Sri Lanka China Social and Cultural Cooperation held a webinar on July 13, 2020. We have reached broad consensus on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic together and promoting practical cooperation between China and South Asia through friendly dialogue and open communication, and hereinafter initiate the following:

1. Recognizing that COVID-19 is indeed a common enemy of mankind that has been threatening the life and health of peoples all around the

world and damaging the world order of production and living, we appeal to the people in power in the world to put people first, respect life and science, work together and help those in difficulty and contribute wisdom and strength to winning a worldwide victory over COVID-19 at an early date.

2. Facing unprecedented challenges with increasing instabilities and uncertainties, we call on people of all countries to join hands together and speak with one voice for justice, solidarity, cooperation and development. We firmly uphold multilateralism, equity and justice, and resolutely oppose hegemonism, unilateralism and protectionism. We stand firm against any attempt to damage international solidarity and cooperation on fighting the pandemic, including politicization and stigmatization of the pandemic.

3. Acknowledging that China and South Asia are good neighbors with a long-lasting friendship and shared destiny, characterized by mutual support and mutual benefit, we appeal to China and South Asian countries to uphold the Bandung spirit of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, strengthen solidarity and cooperation and advance people-to-people contact and friendship. In light of the Asia spirit, Asia wisdom and Asia strength, we will make greater efforts to push forward the Belt and Road Initiative, to promote win-win cooperation for common development and to safeguard regional and world peace and prosperity, as well as build a community with a shared future for mankind. ■

CPAFFC President Lin Songtian meets with Cuban Ambassador Carlos Miguel Pereira Hernandez

The Division of Latin American Affairs

President Lin Songtian of the CPAFFC met with Cuban Ambassador Carlos Miguel Pereira Hernandez on July 28.

Lin welcomed Pereira, who is in his second term as ambassador. As the first ambassador from Americas to visit the CPAFFC since Lin took office as president, Pereira exemplified the traditional friendship and special relationship that has existed between China and Cuba. Cuba was the first the country in the Western Hemisphere to establish diplomatic relations with China. Lin noted that the traditional friendship between China and Cuba is deeply rooted in people-to-people relations and the political, party-to-party, economic and people-to-people relationship between the two countries have continued to develop. Past and incumbent Chinese leaders, especially President Xi Jinping, have attached great importance to the development of China-Cuba relations.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, leaders and foreign ministers of both countries have expressed support for each other, highlighting the high-level development of China-Cuba relations under strong leadership of both countries' top leaders.

Lin said, under the firm leadership of the CPC Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core, the Chinese people were the first in the world to overcome the epidemic. The country has resumed work and production and restored order. Cuba is also worth commending for its efforts to control the disease. The leading parties and governments of the two countries have given people's lives and health top priority and made every effort to save every life, as vindication of the nature of socialism that people take priority.

Both countries are among the few in the world to send medical teams to

Africa and other places to help fight the disease, demonstrating international humanitarianism and setting an example in the global fight against the pandemic.

Lin said facts had proved that humanity is a community with a shared future. In the face of the global pandemic, no country can remain safe on its own, he said. The political systems, values, governance systems and capacities have been put under an open, equal and transparent test. The United States is the only superpower in the world. However, Lin said, rather than investing its energy and resources in fighting the diseases and saving lives, the US has gone to extremes in creating political viruses, labeling and politicizing the pandemic. These moves have cost 150,000 lives in the US, seriously undermining the global fight against the pandemic and ruining the world's hope of winning the battle at an early date. The world is paying the price. The irresponsible and selfish behavior of Washington has once again unveiled the nature of capitalism. And the world has once again seen through the nature of the US as a hegemonic power.

Lin also briefed the Cuban envoy about the significance of the promulgation and implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. He spoke highly of the firm support Cuba had given China at the UN Human Rights Council in what he

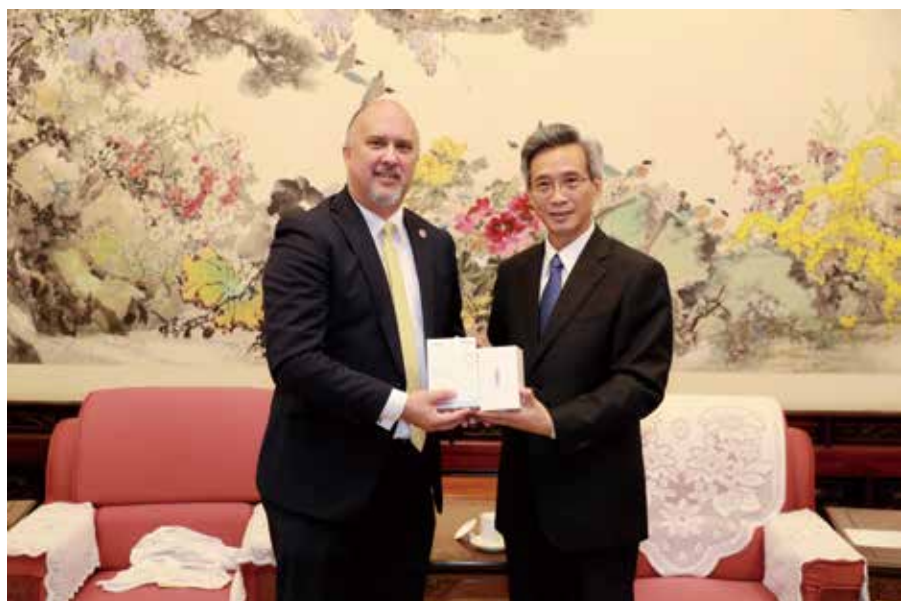
called a "justified act". Lin noted that China and Cuba, as good friends, comrades, brothers and battle companions, have offered mutual understanding and support for both sides' core interests and issues of common concern, and steadfastly preserved the common interests of both countries and justice in the world.

"China strongly opposes the political pressure and economic embargo imposed by the US on Cuba on the pretext of fighting terrorism," Lin said. "China firmly believes that Cuba will conquer all difficulties and win the final victory under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba."

Lin said that, while oceans apart, China and Cuba share a lasting friendship. This year marks the 60th

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. To celebrate, the CPAFFC will strengthen its cooperation with the Cuban embassy and the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, encourage more people to participate in the celebrations, fully utilize sub-national cooperation and enhance friendly exchanges and win-win cooperation between the people, local governments, enterprises and social organizations of the two countries to promote mutual understanding and friendship.

Together we will translate our friendship into mutually beneficial cooperation, increasing people's sense of gain and happiness and laying a solid foundation in public opinion for furthering the China-Cuba friendship.



CPAFFC President Lin Songtian speaks at sister cities conference

Liu Yi



Pereira expressed appreciation for China's great achievements in fighting COVID-19 and its leading role in the world's battle against the pandemic. He said he is grateful for the support China has extended to Cuba, adding that Cuba and China will continue to support each other in protecting their core interests and solving issues of common concern, while resolutely speaking out for each other.

Cooperation will continue to be carried out in fighting COVID-19, countering hegemony and safeguarding equality and justice in the world, he said.

Pereira agreed with Lin, saying that Cuba and China, as socialist countries, have been pursuing a people-centered governing philosophy and sticking to their own way of development, winning international praise. He pointed to the natural amity, close connection and mutual concerns between the two peoples.

The Cuban embassy and Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, he said, would like to work with the CPAFFC to celebrate the 60th anniversary, strengthening friendly exchanges and cooperation in various areas in the post-pandemic era.

Both sides carried out discussions and reached consensus on ways to celebrate the anniversary and promote people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

After the meeting, Lin donated infrared thermometers to the ambassador in support of Cuban people's fight against the pandemic on behalf of the CPAFFC. Pereira expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Cuban people. ■

On July 8 and 9, 2020, Sister Cities International of the United States held the first virtual edition of its annual conference. On July 9, President Lin Songtian of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries delivered a congratulatory speech via the internet at the opening ceremony of the conference.

Lin noted that with COVID-19 raging across the globe, hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost. People are threatened in every country. Under this special circumstance, the annual conference provides an important platform for strengthening exchanges

and cooperation among sister cities in different countries and discussing ways to further the relationships. The international community can win the war against the common enemy of mankind only by strengthening solidarity and cooperation, Lin said.

The CPAFFC president noted that after the outbreak of COVID-19, the Chinese government under the leadership of President Xi Jinping made people's lives the top priority and using science rapidly contained the spread of the disease. Work and production resumed before other affected nations and China contributed to global pandemic

fight.

Lin noted the mutual support of the people of China and the United States during the pandemic and stressed the importance of love and friendship in times of distress. Since the outbreak, sister cities in both countries and people from all walks of lives expressed sympathy to each other in various ways and took immediate action to donate a substantial amount of epidemic prevention and control materials to each other. Online conferences were held to share experience and to provide encouragement and support. Earlier this year, the city of Wuhan and the province of Hubei, the epicenter of the disease, received much sympathy, along with a large number of masks and protective suits from their counterparts in the US, including the city of Pittsburgh and the state of Ohio.

The Chinese people have a tradition of showing gratitude. When the pandemic broke out in the US, Chinese provinces and cities extended assistance to their American sister states and cities, donating supplies for epidemic prevention and control. According to incomplete statistics, Chinese localities have donated 2 million masks of various types, more than 30,000 protective suits, 130,000 pairs of medical gloves and 30,000 pairs of protective goggles. In addition, by the end of May, China has exported more than 12 billion masks to the US, supporting the country's fight against the pandemic unconditionally.

Lin said that while China and the US have different cultures, values and social systems, the people of the two

countries both love and respect life, seek solidarity and show selflessness and devotion to others. Now, mankind has entered an era of win-win cooperation and common development, he said. The people of the two countries should continue to respect and trust each other and treat each other in an equal manner. Only in so doing can the two nations coexist in harmony, work together to maintain a peaceful world, promote common development and make a better living for the people of the world.

The CPAFFC would like to work with Sister Cities International and friends from all parts of the globe to build and strengthen bridges of friendship to enhance sub-national cooperation, strengthen people-to-people friendship and promote common development, said the CPAFFC president.

The SCI concluded the annual conference by announcing that former vice-chair of the board Carol Robertson Lopez had been elected chair of the board. In her speech, Lopez noted that 2019 marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the US and China and the Fourth China-US Mayors Summit co-sponsored by SCI and the CPAFFC had built a platform for promoting people-to-people friendship and peace between the two countries. SCI would like to strengthen its cooperation with the CPAFFC in promoting exchanges and mutual understanding, she said.

Ron Nirenberg, former chairman of the SCI board of directors, said 2020 has been an unprecedented year in human history. Everyone has felt the di-

sastrous impact of the pandemic. We must face the dilemmas and challenges head on, she said. We must make changes and transformations. We must not only adapt to the new normal of wearing a mask and frequently washing our hands but also come up with new solutions to our common major problems. We must make new progress in a more open and inclusive way, abandoning the old ways, he said.

Different countries, cities and communities should support and make each other stronger and more resilient, he said. He also expressed hope that the exchanges and dialogues of the conference would deliver a positive message for preserving peace and promoting cooperation to the whole world.

Under the theme "Retaining Citizen Diplomacy: New Connection in a Virtual World", the annual conference was attended by representatives from the US Department of State, UN-Habitat, sub-national governments, SCI networks and universities from different countries and regions.

Representatives held discussions on shared experiences in various sessions: "New Opportunities for Connections in a Virtual World", "Strengthening Cooperation with Our Global Partners: Models for Connectivity", "Managing City Diplomacy During and After a Pandemic", "Arts and Culture in the Post Pandemic Era" and "Next-Gen Leaders: Where They Are Going and Why".

Karen Pence, wife of the vice-president of the United States and honorary co-chair of SCI, also sent a welcome message to the conference. ■

President of South Africa-China People's Friendship Association: Unite against the pandemic and inject new momentum into China-Africa relations

Department of Asian and African Affairs

In his letter addressed to CPAFFC President Lin Songtian, President Manne Dipico of the South Africa-China People's Friendship Association extended his congratulations on the success of the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19.

Dipico called China a true friend of Africa on the road of development. The fight against COVID-19 will bring closer ties between China and Africa. Here is the full text of the letter:

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled "Defeating COVID-19 with Solidarity and Cooperation" last Wednesday at the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Soli-

darity against COVID-19 via videoconference from Beijing, calling for more efforts to mobilize necessary resources, stick together in collaboration and do whatever it takes to protect people's lives and health and minimize the fallout of COVID-19.

At such a critical moment in the global fight against COVID-19, the SA-China People's Friendship Association as an organization focusing on exchanges and cooperation between the people of South Africa and China would like to congratulate you on the success of the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19. The summit demonstrates the firm determination of both sides to

work together to fight the pandemic, for the international community to strengthen cooperation and inject powerful energy to overcome this pandemic!

I fully agree with President Xi Jinping's views: In the face of COVID-19, China and Africa have withstood the test of a severe challenge. The Chinese people have put up a fierce fight and made enormous sacrifices to bring the situation in China under control. Still, we remain mindful of the risk of a resurgence.

In the same spirit, the governments and people of Africa have put up a united front, and under the effective coordination of the African Union have

taken strong measures to effectively slow the spread of the virus.

These are indeed hard-won results. China and Africa have offered mutual support and fought shoulder-to-shoulder with each other in the face of COVID-19. China and Africa have enhanced solidarity and strengthened friendship and mutual trust.

African countries stood united with China when the pandemic broke out in China, and China is now taking concrete actions to stand with Africa. This is especially true for the solidarity and cooperation that President Xi Jinping mentioned many times in his speech as the most powerful weapon in the fight against the pandemic.

China has also pledged to take the lead in benefiting African countries after the COVID-19 vaccine is developed and put into use. This shows that China has always been a true friend of Africa on the road of development. We believe that the fight against COVID-19 will bring closer ties between China and Africa.

We are aware China has donated medical supplies and sent teams of medical experts to over 50 African countries. We are a community of shared future and win-win cooperation on the road of fighting the pandemic. History has repeatedly proved that if China develops well, Africa will develop more smoothly. If Africa develops smoothly, China will develop even better! ■

President of Thai-Chinese Friendship Association defends Chinese government's exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong

Wu Jiong



H. E. Korn Dabbaransi, president of Thai-Chinese Friendship Association and former deputy prime minister of Thailand, was recently interviewed about the Law of the People's Republic of China on

Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, which was adopted by the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China.

Korn Dabbaransi said that thanks

to China's national governance system, COVID-19 has been effectively controlled in China in a short time. Whenever crisis and difficulties arise, the key to their solution is that China unswervingly follows the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Korn noted that it had been 23 years since the Chinese government resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. That was on July 1, 1997. Hong Kong is an inseparable part of Chinese territory, allowing no doubt about the central government's legal exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, he said, adding that no country should make improper comments on other countries' internal affairs.

The policy Thai administrations have adhered to in foreign affairs is to always respect other countries' sovereignty and not interfere in their internal affairs, Korn said.

He said the fact that China's long-term economic growth remains sound has helped stabilize the global economy. As the economic center of East Asia, Hong Kong can also benefit from the country's economy.

Korn expressed admiration for the broad vision and profound insight of President Xi Jinping with his proposed Belt and Road Initiative. He noted that the BRI fosters connectivity between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Africa, Europe and other regions and countries to achieve common development and prosperity. Thai investors have made — and will continue to make — investments and develop businesses in China with the support of the BRI to realize win-win cooperation, Korn said. ■

Congratulations on the 99th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China

Luis Gonzalez

The Communist Party of China is the most important political party in the world today, having led the Chinese people to achieve the greatest economic and social transformation in the shortest time in the history of humanity. The Party has 92 million members, of which 28 percent are women and 7.4 percent are from minority ethnic groups.

The CPC was founded in Shanghai on Friday, July 1, 1921. As pioneers of Marxism studies in China, Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu were planning China's social transformation and became the protagonists of the revolution.

It was just four years since the Russian Revolution, led by Lenin, had ended the rule of the Romanov dynasty. One of the goals of the Soviets was to promote communist ideology. There-

fore, they did not hesitate to provide economic and theoretical support for the Chinese revolutionaries, who had just overthrown the Qing Dynasty less than 10 years before and were exploring a sustainable, people-oriented government model.

The first CPC congress was held on July 23, 1921. Mao Zedong, representing Hunan province, was one of the 13 members to attend. The Communist International sent two representatives.

The CPC was 28 years old when Mao Zedong announced the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, and turned 57 when Deng Xiaoping launched the reform and opening-up drive in December 1978, bringing the development seen in China today. This year marks the 99th

anniversary of the Party.

At the 19th CPC National Congress held in October 2017, the Constitution of the CPC was revised to include new concepts of governance, thoughts and strategies, aimed at turning the Party into a stronger organization and moving toward long-awaited socio-economic and political rejuvenation on the basis of socialism with Chinese characteristics. To this end, President Xi Jinping has urged the people not to forget the path they have traveled and the role played by the Party.

This year coincides with the second anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Dominican Republic and the PRC. A little more than two years ago, on May 1, 2018, the two countries signed a joint communique in Beijing on the establishment of diplomatic relations. Ambassador Zhang Run, the first Chinese ambassador to the Dominican Republic, has played an important role.

We congratulate the CPC on its 99th anniversary and invite all who wish to understand China's development today to study the CPC. The People's Republic of China cannot be understood without understanding the CPC. So, please get to know the CPC. ■

The author is secretary-general of the Latin America and Caribbean-China Friendship Federation; director-general (ambassador rank) of the Asia-Pacific Affairs Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic; and a political scientist, international legal scholar and sinologist.

Sri Lanka, China strengthen collaboration during pandemic and beyond

Jinith De Silva

Friendship entered Sri Lanka many centuries ago from ancient China via the fabulous Silk Road. Since then, the two countries have established close relations in economic and cultural fields.

Bilateral relations gathered momentum after both countries achieved independence. Sri Lanka was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China when it was founded in 1949.

When diplomatic ties were initiated by Prime Minister S W R D Bandaranaike in 1956, relations between the two countries became very warm and laid the foundation for cooperation in several fields.

Anytime disaster has struck, China has been among the first to come to Sri Lanka's assistance. In 2004, when the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated Sri Lanka, China helped with reconstruction. Help came again after the end of a nearly three-decade separatist movement and civil war in Sri Lanka. China provided the war devastated island nation with soft loans for its de-

velopment.

Sri Lanka values the friendship, and it too has supported China whenever necessary. When the novel coronavirus outbreak was reported in China, Sri Lanka's political leaders, cutting across political lines, expressed solidarity.

Although a thousand miles away, millions of Sri Lankans have been cheering and supporting the Chinese people in their fight against the epidemic. Many civil societies have come forward to organize religious activities and show the support of the Sri Lankan people.

A moving gesture came from Devi Balika Vidyalaya in Colombo, a prestigious public girl's school with a history of more than 60 years. Forty-three of its young girls wrote a letter to Peng Liyuan, wife of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and included drawings showing their support for China. To their joy, Peng wrote back on March 2, expressing appreciation for their support of China's COVID-19 combat and encouraging them to carry forward the traditional friendship between two

countries. The spontaneous gesture by the young girls can be said to symbolize the future of China-Sri Lanka friendship.

On March 4, Hu Wei, the charge de affairs of the Chinese embassy in Sri Lanka, delivered Peng Liyuan's reply to Pradeepa Samarasinghe, the school's principal. The children were so happy they rushed to pass on the precious letter from China and their excitement could not be concealed.

The Communist Party of China led the Chinese people to successfully control the virus in a short period and restart economic activities. Under Xi's leadership, China actively worked with other countries to jointly uphold global public health security, providing medical supplies and expertise to affected countries to help them fight the virus.

China came first to the aid of Sri Lanka as it faced the pandemic from March onward. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 on the island until July, the central and local governments, enterprises, organizations and individuals from China have stepped forward to help.

When requested by Sri Lanka in the fight against the epidemic, China provided a loan of \$500 million to be paid in 10 years. China has donated more than 73,000 test kits, 3.1 million disposable masks, 21,000 KN95 masks, 54,000 protective gowns, 41,000 sets of eye-goggles and 14,5000 pairs of medical gloves, among other things.

At my request as acting president of the Sri Lanka China Society, 19 NGOs in China donated personal protective equipment, which is useful combating COVID-19 — face masks

(400,600), face shields (1,600), goggles (2,400) and protective gowns (400).

The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in Beijing and its branches in provinces and Amity Foundation in Nanjing also came forward to support Sri Lanka. The estimated value of their donations came to around 1.2 million RMB (\$173,000). Some Chinese foreign friendship organizations sent us more than they had agreed and some doubled it. It is evident that during any type of disaster, not only the Chinese government but even ordinary people in China at the grassroots level are willing to support Sri Lanka in overcoming the problems faced by our country. The Sri Lanka China Society greatly appreciates the support given by our Chinese friends

all over China in this endeavor.

Our collection of donations drew praise from both the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who tweeted "Our sincere appreciation to the Sri Lanka China Society for coordinating the donations."

It is a great pleasure to note that pupils of the Hangzhou Caihe No 03 Primary School, a Chinese sister school of Sri Lanka's Devi Balika Vidyalaya, organized an art exhibition to show their solidarity and friendship towards Sri Lanka in its fight against the novel coronavirus. They also wrote a letter to our president to express their solidarity and friendship. Recently these children received a letter of appreciation from Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Raj-



On March 4, Hu Wei, the charge de affairs of the Chinese embassy in Sri Lanka, delivered Peng Liyuan's reply to Pradeepa Samarasinghe, the school's principal.

apaksa.

The president expressed thanks to China's government and people for the valuable advice and medical aid sent to Sri Lanka in recent months as the island country fought COVID-19, which had killed 11 people and infected more than 2,700. President Rajapaksa reiterated in a statement on his official Twitter account that China and Sri Lanka had shown immense cooperation in supporting each other during the pandemic and will continue to foster good relations.

Many of the consignments sent by Chinese organizations carried the Chinese and Sri Lankan flags, along with inspirational messages of support and solidarity written in Chinese, Sinhala, Tamil and English. Chinese telecommunications equipment maker Huawei's assistance carried a quote by the Buddha, saying, "Health is the Ultimate Wealth." The quote resonated in Sri Lanka, where 70 percent of the population is Buddhist.

It is strongly believed that these donations from the Chinese people will contribute to the health and well-being of the Sri Lankan people and enhance the historical friendship between the two countries.

Finally, I would like to mention what President Xi often says: We will continue to work with people from all countries to push jointly for building a community with a shared future for mankind. ■

(The author is acting president of the Sri Lanka China Society.)

China-Europe Railway Express (Chengdu) connects Chengdu with Europe for anti-pandemic cooperation

Chengdu People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

Since the China-Europe Railway Express (Chengdu) began service, it has become an important logistics channel connecting Chengdu with Europe. After the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the express line became a green channel to deliver medical supplies from Chengdu to its corresponding friendship cities in Europe, greatly enhancing anti-pandemic cooperation between Chengdu and the European countries along the route. Meanwhile, the move also made this train more popular along the Belt and Road route.

During the outbreak, shipments of donated goods from Chengdu to European cities were blocked because of reduced international flights. Troubled by the lengthy waiting lines, inconvenient transit, high costs and many other unfavorable factors, Chengdu and its overseas friendly cities thought of the China-Europe Railway Express, which

boasts a more stable and safe operation and involves fewer quarantine restrictions. On May 20, sounding a long whistle, the train carrying medical supplies donated by Chengdu Municipal People's Government to its friendly cities Maastricht and Tilburg in the Netherlands departed from Chengdu Qingbaijiang International Railway Port. The China-Europe Railway Express (Chengdu) rapidly delivered the urgently needed supplies, including 3,400 medical protective masks and 20,000 surgical masks to the Netherlands, accompanied by the profound friendship of people of Chengdu. With the cooperation of both sides' customs and logistics companies, it only took about 20 days to complete the whole process of transportation and customs clearance.

The medical supplies provided to the friendship cities were a warm gesture from Chengdu, which was reciprocating the warmhearted care and help

from the friendly European cities and conveyed the strength and confidence to overcome difficulties together. After receiving the donation from Chengdu, Maastricht held a special handover ceremony, in which Deputy Mayor Vivianne Heijnen gave goods to the Envida healthcare organization.

In the video of gratitude, Deputy Mayor Vivianne Heijnen said: “We have a severe coronavirus pandemic taking place at the moment in Western Europe and in Maastricht. It is very important for us that we protect our inhabitants and the people that work in our care homes. Thanks to your donation, the people in the care homes of Maastricht can be protected against the coronavirus.”

She added: “Exactly a year ago I was attending the Mayor’s Conference in Chengdu and I looked back with a lot of pleasure to that. I hope we reunite and we come together very soon again. Thank you very much.”

Roger Ruijter, the CEO of Envida, said: “We had a severe crisis because of Covid-19, and we are very grateful for the mouth masks that you gave us. We need them very much, and they are very high quality. And it is very important for our employers’ safe working and also for our clients. We wish you all the best in Chengdu and I hope I will have the opportunity to thank you personally sometime in the future.” The mayor of Tilburg, Th. L.N. Weterings, personally received and transferred the donation to the local hospital. The international relations department of Tilburg commented on the Chengdu-Tilburg freight train carrying medical supplies: “It’s more like a main artery connecting the two cities during this

difficult time, carrying not only medical supplies but also the care and assistance from Chengdu, our friendship city.”

As the saying goes, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” The urgently needed supplies donated by Chengdu symbolize the precious friendship between the two sides. This year marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of sister-city relationship between Chengdu and Lodz, closely connected by the Chengdu-Europe Express Railway. With this crucial logistics link, frequent exchanges between Chengdu and Lodz have borne fruit in culture, education and other fields.

Chengdu and Lodz were even given the China-Poland Friendly Cooperation Award for two consecutive

years. To celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Chengdu-Lodz friendship and to encourage the people of Lodz to fight the pandemic, Chengdu Deputy Mayor Niu Qingbao recorded a video to demonstrate the friendship and solidarity between Chengdu and Lodz in the tough times. The China-Europe Railway Express (Chengdu), loaded with 1,700 medical masks and 10,000 surgical masks donated by the Chengdu Municipal Government, took just 17 days to arrive in Poland.

Lodz attached great importance to the donation and held a news conference that was attended by Mayor Hanna Zdanowska and City Council President Marcin Golaszewski. News of the donation was widely spread on the city’s website, local TV broadcasts and online media. Mayor Zhdanowska and



Deputy Mayor Vivianne Heijnen of Maastricht (Left) handed over the medical supplies donated by Chengdu to Roger Ruijter (Right), CEO of Envida Healthcare Organization.

President Golaszewski expressed gratitude to Chengdu with a “thank you” in Chinese and said the masks would be distributed to nursing homes in desperate need of supplies.

“Although we are separated by thousands of miles, our hearts are closely connected,” Golaszewski said. In a letter of gratitude from Zhdanowska, she wrote: “The donation from our partner city is not only a help in the fight against the pandemic but also a message of encouragement coming to us from a country that was first to overcome this extremely difficult situation. It is also a symbol of international partnership carrying the message ‘Together we are stronger’.”

In the cold wave of the spreading COVID-19 pandemic, the China-Europe Railway Express burst out of the haze. It ran across the continent of Asia and Europe, carrying much-needed supplies, warmth and love from Chengdu. It promoted confidence and strength for Sino-European cooperation in the fight against pandemic. From January to May, the express rail line launched more than 1,200 trains for year-on-year growth rate of 45.9 percent.

To ensure the normal and orderly operation of the China-Europe Railway Express, Chengdu will further enhance the railway’s capacity and efficiency, provide important support for countries to fight the pandemic and deepen cooperation, protect the international logistics supply chain, expand economic and trade cooperation with countries along the route and make new contributions to the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road. ■

Ningxia, Gyeongsangbuk-do fight COVID-19 together

Asian Affairs Division of Ningxia Foreign Affairs Office

On June 3, 2020, Zhang Tao, head of the Asian Affairs Division of the Foreign Affairs Office of the People’s Government of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, received a text message saying, “You have 17 packages from Weihai city to be

received.”

No relatives, no friends and no colleagues were in Weihai, so how could that happen? Zhang Tao couldn’t be more confused. It was just then he happened to glance at the map of Asia in his office. Weihai! Republic of Ko-



Government officials from the city of Gyeongsan, Gyeongsangbuk-do, who used to attend exchange programs in Yinchuan, Ningxia, voice their support for Yinchuan’s fight against COVID-19.

rea! Gyeongsangbuk-do!

All of a sudden, time was pulled back more than three months to when Ningxia and Gyeongsangbuk-do were fighting hard against the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Feb 26, 300 disposable protective suits, 10,000 pairs of gloves and 400 bottles of hand sanitizer donated to Ningxia by the government of Gyeongsangbuk-do, ROK, were shipped in two batches to Weihai. On that day, a total of 283 new COVID-19 cases were confirmed in Gyeongsangbuk-do, 52 more than the previous day. And just three days earlier, Gyeongsangbuk-do was named a “special control area for infectious diseases” by the government and thus was put under the strictest control measures.

The fact that the Korean province managed to collect so much medical material in such a situation to donate to Ningxia demonstrated its confidence in winning the battle against the pandemic and attested to the priceless friendship between the two provinces to stand closely together in difficult times.

On Jan 29, soon after the coronavirus first emerged in Ningxia, the government of Gyeongsangbuk-do expressed its willingness to donate anti-pandemic supplies to Ningxia. It was timely support for a Chinese province that was facing a grim situation. Over the next 20 days, government workers of Gyeongsangbuk-do contacted manufacturers everywhere but were told that some were already booked, while oth-

ers lacked raw materials. Even so, they managed to collect the aforementioned supplies and send them to Ningxia as quickly as possible. On March 10, the first protective suits and gloves arrived in Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia, and were quickly distributed to the front line of pandemic prevention and control through the Red Cross Society of China’s Ningxia branch. However, hand sanitizer failed to arrive on time because of control measures in place at that time in the ROK.

The touching story of Ningxia and Gyeongsangbuk-do joining hands to fight the pandemic has since begun to unfold. On Feb 5, the city of Gyeongsan, Gyeongsangbuk-do, ordered 10,000 KF94 masks for donation to Yinchuan, its international sister city in Ningxia. However, Gyeongsan was already running short of masks for itself at the time. On Feb 8, seven civil servants from Gyeongsan who had worked in Yinchuan under an exchange program made a video in Chinese and Korean to cheer for Ningxia.

“Stay strong, China; stay strong, Wuhan; stay strong, Ningxia; stay strong, Yinchuan!” The words, which were full of energy and strength, greatly boosted people’s confidence. On Feb 17, Lee Cheol Woo, governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do, sent a letter to principal leaders of Communist Party of China Ningxia Committee and the People’s Government of Ningxia, offering sympathy, along with support for Ningxia’s pandemic prevention and

control efforts. On Feb 20, Governor Lee Cheol Woo sent a video through People’s Daily Online, once again expressing his firm support for Ningxia and other friendly regions of China. On March 10, a batch of masks donated by the Gyeongsangbuk-do office of educational research arrived in Yinchuan. The last batch of hand sanitizer donated by the government of Gyeongsangbuk-do also arrived on June 3.

“We treat each other with all sincerity. Our hearts are free of stain as ice in a crystal vase.”

These words are from a poem written by Xu Yun, an ancient Korean poet. It has also become a vivid portrayal of joint efforts between Ningxia and Gyeongsangbuk-do in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. While the situation in Ningxia had seen positive changes, things were getting worse in Gyeongsangbuk-do. The number of confirmed cases was increasing, and supplies for pandemic prevention were in short supply.

Paying close attention to these issues, Ningxia began to act. Despite the limited supplies, Ningxia tried its best to collect a batch of much-needed medical supplies, including 1,000 N95 medical masks, 10,000 surgical masks, 20,000 disposable medical masks and 1,000 pairs of goggles. It transported the supplies to Gyeongsangbuk-do on March 18. The Yinchuan municipal government also sent a letter of sympathy and support to Gyeongsan on Feb 26 and gave the Korean city 10,000

KF94 masks without delay. Recently, Yinchuan again donated 36,000 medical masks to Gyeongsang, which has greatly boosted its confidence in overcoming the pandemic.

At the same time, the staff of Yinchuan foreign affairs office, the civil servants who had been to Gyeongsangbuk-do for short-term exchanges, the junior high school students who once visited the Korean province and some entrepreneurs from Ningxia recorded videos of support, conveying the strong faith of Ningxia and Gyeongsangbuk-do in making concerted efforts to fight the pandemic and share the successes and hard times.

The Yinchuan Youth Entrepreneurs Association also sent a letter of sympathy and support to the Gyeongsangbuk-do Youth CEO Association and donated 6,000 masks to them.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a test, not only of prevention and control abilities but also of friendly relations. In the face of the severe situation, Ningxia and Gyeongsangbuk-do stood together to translate their friendly relations into a powerful force to overcome the pandemic and have effectively maintained the safety and health of both peoples and set an example for local governments in China and the ROK on how to join hands to prevail over the pandemic.

Of course, Rome was not built in a day. Ningxia had forged strong ties with Gyeongsangbuk-do since 2004 when the two sides signed

an agreement establishing friendly exchange relations.

Over the past 16 years, the two provinces have engaged with each other closely in various fields and carried out a series of branding projects and practical cooperation, including a civil servant exchange, youth exchange and cosmetics industry cooperation, among others.

In the joint fight against the COVID-19, the friendly relations between the two provinces has been deeply rooted in the people, and that has laid a solid foundation for the formal estab-

lishment of a friendship province relationship.

At present, the two provinces are actively talking over the plan and taking steps to strengthen exchanges in the fields of economy and trade, medical care, education and investment.

Both sides stand ready to develop the friendly relations in a more pragmatic direction, to let the light of friendship disperse the haze of the pandemic as soon as possible, and to create a brighter future with stronger friendly ties between the two peoples. ■



Ningxia donates medical supplies to Gyeongsangbuk-do.

Join hands and develop together

— Photo exhibition opens to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Zhangzhou-Date International Friendship City Relations

Lu Meilian

On the first day of a photo exhibition on the 10th anniversary of the establishment of international friendship city relations between Zhangzhou, Fujian province, and Date, Fukushima prefecture, Hokkaido, Japan, visitors were deeply moved.

“I didn’t realize Zhangzhou had such a good international sister with such deep friendship,” one said.

Another said: “Compared with other exhibitions with a heavy sense of history, the literature-style friendship city photo exhibition looks very modern.”

“I will go to Date sometime in the future to get a feel of the friendship be-

tween the two cities,” said another.

The photo exhibition was hosted by the Zhangzhou Foreign Affairs Office and the Zhangzhou Archives at the Zhangzhou Municipal Library. It was also presented concurrently online on the website of the FAO. Themed “Join Hands and Develop Together”, the exhibition showed 156 historical photos shot after the friendship cities relationship was established. Divided into four sections — “Friendly Exchanges”, “Beautiful Date”, “Warm Presents” and “Press Coverage” — the exhibition reviews the history of friendly exchanges and looks to a bright future of cooperation.

Zhang Yiteng, vice-mayor of the Zhangzhou Municipal Government, visited the exhibition with heads of the Zhangzhou FAO, the archives, the culture and tourism bureau and the library. Zhang noted that since Zhangzhou and Date had established friendship city relations, the two had carried out exchanges in culture, economy, agriculture, tourism and other fields.

This year, Zhang said, the friendship had particularly shown its strength through cooperation in fighting the coronavirus pandemic. He expressed hope that the two cities would also seek exchanges and cooperation in more

areas to achieve mutual benefits in the future.

Tie the knot and open a new chapter

In April 2010, Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi of Date and Speaker Daiko Iwao of the Date parliament led a delegation on a visit to Zhangzhou, where an agreement establishing an international friendship was signed and officials from both cities planted friendship trees together in Victory Park.

After 10 years, the camphor trees, which are believed to bode well for the future, had flourished and grown sturdy. They became symbols of the evergreen friendship between the two cities.

At the beginning, there was a meaningful and interesting event during the Japanese delegation's stay in Zhangzhou. While Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi was enjoying the local Xiang Opera *Tying the Knot*, he was hit by an embroidered ball tossed by the beautiful princess in the opera. He climbed onto the stage amid the audiences' cheers and became the "Mr. Right" of the play's Princess of Zhangzhou. The amused audience said it meant that Zhangzhou and Date had tied the knot and would press ahead hand in hand, and it opened a new chapter of happiness and good luck for the two cities.

Since then, Zhangzhou and Date have organized 18 groups of 138 friends for mutual visits and exchanges

in culture, economy, agriculture, tourism and other fields. The close international friendship was written into the history of the two cities' mutual development.

Review past, look to future

With an area of 444.3 square kilometers and a population of about

34,000, Date is one of the most livable cities in Japan. It boasts a mild climate and forest coverage of 88 percent. It is the main grain producing area of Hokkaido, a scientific research and promotion base for agriculture and fisheries and as the industrial base for eldercare and overall health care. It has great potential for cooperation with Zhangzhou in those fields.

In May 2019, Mayor Liu Yuan led





In May 2019, Mayor Liu Yuan led a Zhangzhou government delegation to visit Date and signed a memorandum for exchanges and cooperation with Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi.

a Zhangzhou government delegation to visit Date and signed a memorandum for exchanges and cooperation with Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi. The move was made to implement the requirements of the Fujian Party Committee and provincial government that leaders of cities and counties attract overseas investment and focus on the city's industrial development. Promoting exchanges and cooperation between friendship cities was a basic goal.

The two sides reached consensus to further promote exchanges and co-

operation in economy, trade, science and technology, talent education, eldercare, health care, tourism and other areas, to enhance industrial cooperation, share urban management experience, strengthen inter-school and youth exchanges and expand news exchanges and consultations to promote the common prosperity and development of the two cities.

To implement the spirit of the memorandum, Zhangzhou sought cooperation opportunities with the Date government, Date Japan-China Friend-

ship Association and Japan Minnan Cultural Exchanges Association in fighting the epidemic and in other areas, to continuously enhance cooperation in modern agriculture, food processing, eco-tourism and elderly service industries, among other fields.

Cooperation in fighting epidemic

In early 2020, the outbreak of a novel coronavirus brought dramatic changes around the world. Caring about Zhangzhou very much, Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi of Date wrote a letter of sympathy immediately, saying "Hope the epidemic will end as early as possible, and Zhangzhou will soon return to peaceful life." He also collected 13,450 face masks, 3,000 protective masks, and 3,000 pairs of gloves through the his city's medical supplies storage warehouse, and donated the materials to Zhangzhou. At the same time, the Date Japan-China Friendship Association and Japan Minnan Cultural Exchanges Association donated 130 thermometers to Zhangzhou.

In March 2020, COVID-19 spread to many places around the world. Zhangzhou immediately donated a batch of masks to Date. Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi and Vice-Mayor Niki Ikuhiko received and tried the masks on and then wrote a letter saying, "On behalf of all Date citizens, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Zhangzhou City." The letter said the masks would be used to fight against

the epidemic on the front lines.

Media outlets such as Hokkaido News and Muroran People's Newspaper all covered the support from Zhangzhou, saying "we will cherish the friendship of the Zhangzhou people and make full use of these precious masks."

The fight against COVID-19 has only deepened international friendships.

People-to-people exchanges

As an ambassador for friendly exchanges between Zhangzhou and Date and a leading figure in the Chinese community in Japan, Ke Lingna, executive director of the Date Japan-China Friendship Association, has visited Zhangzhou many times to discuss promoting friendly cooperation between Zhangzhou and Date. Thanks to her efforts, people-to-people exchanges between the two cities have yielded much fruit.

Since 2005, the association and a number of Japanese civilian organizations have organized five batches of 87 people from the fields of industry, commerce, education and economy to visit Zhangzhou. They visited kindergartens, colleges, residential areas, industrial parks, markets and scenic spots.

At Zhangzhou Kindergarten, children held flowers and lined the way to welcome the guests. Their innocence and enthusiasm moved Date friends to tears. In the Beiqiao Market, the group from Japan asked about commodity

prices and sighed with wonder at the richness of their Zhangzhou friends' dinner tables.

Every time a Date civilian goodwill delegation visited Zhangzhou, major media outlets in Japan, such as Hokkaido News and Muroran People's Newspaper, published reports describing local people's daily lives as "Drink morning tea. Do tai chi or morning exercises. Ride a bike. Very healthy and comfortable."

The media also told their audiences that Zhangzhou enjoys a warm climate and is suitable for growing crops and flowers. Coastal port resources are rich, and aquatic

production and processing are developed.

Through the publicity of its sister city, Zhangzhou's lychee and other characteristic fruits have found their way to Japanese tables. The sincerity and warmth of the Zhangzhou people particularly impressed Date friends. There is a sense of affinity between the two cities. Date people are always particularly hospitable towards Chinese visitors.

Cultural exchanges serve as bridges

Calligraphy is a traditional art



Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi (second right) was invited on the stage of Xiang Opera, in dazzling costumes, acting as a bridegroom.



During their first visit to Nanjing Tulou, Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi wrote a special inscription: Fujian Tulou is very wonderful.

that's highly developed in China and Japan. Every time the Date Citizens' Goodwill Delegation visited Zhangzhou, they would create calligraphic works for their Zhangzhou friends on the spot and exchange their experiences in the art of handwriting. During their first visit to Nanjing Tulou, Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi and Speaker Daiko Iwao wrote a special inscription: Fujian Tulou is very wonderful.

The intangible cultural heritage of Zhangzhou, such as puppetry and paper-cutting, gained the attention of the Japanese people through mutual visits and has been well received in local cultural circles.

Sixty-eight members of the goodwill delegation visited Minnan Normal University in three groups. They walked into the classrooms of Japanese language majors and shared their experiences in language learning with them like old friends.

"The students were both happy and nervous when they put their book knowledge into practice. They cherished this rare opportunity for exchanges," said Wu Yingyan, a Japanese language teacher at the university. The more than 400 original Japanese books presented to the university by the Japanese delegation also carried with them the Date people's friendly feelings to-

ward their sister city and deepened understanding between the two peoples.

At present, Minnan Normal University and Japan Simane University, as well as three other universities jointly offer student exchange programs. Hopefully, further cooperation with relevant universities in Japan will be promoted with the active support of Date city.

Through cultural and people-to-people exchanges, the mutual understanding and friendly exchanges between the people of Zhangzhou and Date have been enhanced, and the open development of Zhangzhou has been steadily promoted.

Tulou: Envoy of friendship

With their simple yet grand architectural style, the Tulou towers are the pride of Zhangzhou. They left a deep impression on members of the Date goodwill delegation. Tulou has achieved a certain fame and influence in Date, and laid a solid foundation for tourism cooperation between the two sides.

Seeing local people's love for Tulou and having learned that UNESCO had commissioned Japan's NHK TV station to make a documentary — Fujian Tulou — Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi contacted the TV station to coordinate and copy the documentary and then distributed it to every family. The people of Date were pleased. Whole families gathered around TVs, felt the charm of

Zhangzhou's ancient intangible cultural heritage and applauded the beauty of traditional dwellings in the friendship city.

Zhangzhou people also expressed their appreciation of the beautiful scenery of Date. With the support of the provincial Foreign Affairs Office, Fujian invited Mayor Kikuya Hideyoshi of Date, and Mayor Ogasawara Haruichi of Noboribetsu, along with tourism professionals from Hokkaido, to jointly hold a regional tourism promotion event for the Noboribetsu Toyachiku area in Hokkaido, Japan.

Sincerity: Key to lasting friendship

A good companion makes a far distance near.

The Photo Exhibition on the 10th anniversary of Zhangzhou-Date International Friendship City Relations is a grand gathering of friendship, a milestone in the 10 years of exchanges and a new starting point for Zhangzhou and Date to build a brighter future.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Zhangzhou and Date friendship city relations, the two will embark on a new voyage, strengthen cooperation in broader areas for win-win results, build a more solid bridge of mutual support and draw a blueprint for common prosperity and development. ■

(The author is an official of the Zhangzhou Foreign Affairs Office)

Anti-COVID-19 donations carry inspirational messages

Lian Jianlei

2020 is the year of *Gengzi* in the Chinese calendar. It has witnessed the raging of the COVID-19 disease. Friends, although thousands of miles apart, have donated to each other much needed goods that have traveled across oceans. Inspirational messages were written on consignments to foreign countries and quickly became popular online. Those messages, in large part quotations from ancient poems, were reflections of the authentic culture of the donating countries or the destination countries. They speak volumes about global solidarity in combating COVID-19, enhance friendship between Chinese cities and their international friendship cities and strengthen the cultural connections between civilizations.

Culture strengthens people-to-people friendship

In early February, the verse “Rivers low, mountains high, the same

moon in the sky” was repeatedly quoted in newspapers. It is a Buddhist hymn that appeared on donated packages from a Japanese civil organization to Wuhan, a city in central China that was devastated by COVID-19. The unquoted other half of the hymn is “To those who chant Sutra, Wend in and out Dharma.”

The hymn appeared in China 1,400 years ago, when the Tang Dynasty (618-907) was in its prime. Its author, Prince Nagaya (684-729), was an important Japanese politician and also a devout Buddhist. He sent an envoy to China to study Buddhism. The envoy carried with him nearly 1,000 cassocks as gifts for Chinese monks. On the rim of each of those cassocks was embroidered a Buddhist hymn reading “Rivers low, mountains high, the same moon in the sky; to those who chant sutra, wend in and out Dharma.”

The famous monk Jianzhen was deeply touched by the hymn when he

saw it. He was almost 55 when he decided to go to Japan to promote Buddhism. It required 12 attempts and six trips, of which five were unsuccessful. The fifth led to his blindness. No matter how arduous the journey, he never broke his oath: “I will sacrifice my life to promote Buddhism.” On his sixth attempt, passing through myriad hardships, he finally landed on Japanese shores and began 10 years of Buddhism promotional activities. Jianzhen’s contributions to cultural exchanges between China and Japan were a brilliant chapter in the book of history.

His oath — “I will sacrifice my life for the promotion of Buddhism” — still resonates through time. In return, the Japanese expressed their support for China by quoting the Buddhist hymn “River low, mountains high, the same moon in the sky” as a reminder of the friendship between China and Japan, which transcends time and space, connects people’s hearts and delivers mutual support and solidarity.

Similarly, the Japanese city of Maizuru donated medical supplies to its Chinese friendship city counterpart, Dalian, which had been struck by the epidemic. On the packaging one could find the verse “Though separated by a mountain, we’ll share the same clouds and rain; and a bright moon belongs to not a single town.”

It was quoted from See Off Imperial Censor Chai by Wang Changling,

a Tang Dynasty poet. Wang was selected to be an Imperial Scholar in the Kaiyuan period of the Tang Dynasty. During his career in the government, he saw ups and downs and wrote this poem after he was demoted to a job in Longbiao county (now Qianyang county, Hunan province). His friend Censor Chai happened to pass by the county. Upon Chai’s departure, Wang wrote the poem in farewell. The poem vividly depicts the friendship between the two men, even though separated by long distances. The emotion expressed in the poem suits the new situation in a proper manner. When the Wenchuan earthquake of 2008 and the East Japan tsunami of 2011 struck, China and Japan helped each other get through.

On the packaging of donations from the Chinese city of Shenyang to the Japanese cities of Sapporo and Kawasaki, appeared these messages: “Roses and lilies of the valley are blossoming vibrantly, while Chinese pines and clove trees grow luxuriantly” and “Roses and azaleas are blossoming vibrantly, while Chinese pines and camellia trees grow luxuriantly.” The messages artfully join Shenyang’s city flower, the rose, with its tree, the Chinese pine; Sapporo’s city flower, the lily of the valley, with its tree, the clove; and Kawasaki’s city flower, the azalea, with its city tree, the camellia. Those were symbolic of the cities’ determination and confidence to win the

battle against COVID-19.

In the face of the pandemic, inspirational messages have not been the sole means for people to express friendship and solidarity. Other cultural activities have also been involved. When Chinese people were fighting the disease, Japan’s Matsuyama Ballet Troupe sang *The March of the Volunteers*, the national anthem of China, in a short film through the CPAFFC, its partner, conveying goodwill to the Chinese people, who were experiencing a harsh time in the fight against COVID-19.

The CPAFFC held a series of heartwarming cultural activities during the pandemic. Six well-known singers from home and abroad were invited to perform a song called *The Love of the World* in the five working languages of the United Nations, stressing the importance of solidarity between the five continents in fighting the pandemic. The organization also injected the theme of fighting COVID-19 into other cultural exchange programs, including the China-Europe International Culture and Art Festival, Hands Across the Pacific Art Exhibition, China-South Asia International Cultural Forum and China-Japan-ROK Youth Art Exchange Exhibition. Voice of Friendship, the official magazine of the CPAFFC, also published articles on friendship and mutual help during the pandemic.

We march together in stormy weather and bathe in the brightest

moonlight when it is fine. In the face of the pandemic, we defend our own lives not alone but in solidarity. Culture, charming as it is, comes with warmth like a hearth in chilly winter. Culture conveys support and mutual understanding. Its impact extends beyond national borders and arouses the strength that resides in every human heart. Courage, determination and relentlessness, among other much needed attributes in confronting hardships, stem from the common culture shared by mankind.

Culture connects international friendship cities

In mid-March, Foshan, Guangdong province, donated medical supplies to its South Korean friendship cities Daegu and Busan. The following verse appeared on the packaging of the donations: "The liver and gallbladder are closely related, and like the moon cast a clear reflection on calm water." It reminds people of the friendship between China and the Republic of Korea. The two countries are closely related to each other, as are the liver and gallbladder, and their friendship is as clear as the reflection of a moon on calm water. This was quote from Korea's Joseon period poet Heo Gyun, whose famous poem Seeing Off My Brother Military Counselor Wu Ziyu Back to China reads as follows:

"Though we come from different

lands, we share the same aspirations. We were born brothers and sisters, whether in the territories of Chu or Yue. The liver and gallbladder are closely related, and like the moon cast a clear reflection on calm water."

Heo Gyun (1569-1618), a statesman of the mid-Joseon period, was a poet and novelist. At the end of the Wanli Korean War (1592-98), when the combined forces of the Ming and Joseon battled Japanese invaders, Heo Gyun met with Wu Ziyu (also known as Wu Mingji), a scholar and adviser in the Ming army. Heo wrote this poem praising the friendship between the two countries:

"Though we come from different lands, we share the same aspirations. We were born brothers and sisters, whether in the territories of Chu or Yue. The liver and gallbladder are closely related, and like the moon cast a clear reflection on calm water."

Heo also assisted Wu in compiling the Anthology of Joseon Chinese Poems, the first anthology of poems on the Korean peninsula by a Chinese as a positive contribution to cultural exchanges.

On the packaging of goods donated by Henan province to its international friendship cities in Korea, there appeared the words: "There is no distance to each other." It was quote from Tang poet Zhang Jiuling's Seeing Off Vice Mayor Li From Weicheng. If friends

know each other well, their friendship makes distance disappear.

A good house costs much, but a good neighbor is priceless. There are many stories of friendship in the history of China-Korea relations. Xu Fu of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), who traveled east in search of fairies, landed on Jeju island. Jin Qiaojue, a Silla prince who preached Buddhism in Tang Dynasty China, died and was venerated as Djizang Buddha in Mount Jiuhua in Anhui province. Cui Zhiyuan studied and was selected as a government official in China. He returned to Silla, where he became known as a pioneer in sinology. Kong Shao, a descendant of Confucius, went to Korea and disseminated Confucianism there. Kim Koo, who fought for Korea's independence, spent 27 years in China. Zheng Lyucheng, born in Korea, was the composer of March of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

In fighting COVID-19, international friendship cities have played a significant role. Hard goods such as medical supplies were donated in both directions by international friendship cities. Culture was also provided. The CPAFFC led historic cultural cities dialogues between China, Germany, France, Morocco and Israel, as well as sponsoring the Tang Xianzu Theatre Festival and International Theatre Exchange Month. Those activities promoted cultural exchanges between dif-

ferent countries in drama, painting and handicrafts, strengthening the friendship between cities and communities through the power of art.

Cultural exchanges promote understanding between civilizations

Italy was severely hit by the pandemic earlier this year. On the packaging of Chinese donations there appeared a verse by Ming scholar Li Rihua to Italian clergyman Matteo Ricci (1552-1610):

“The morning sun rises above a sea of clouds. When spring comes, it sees no boundaries.”

The original poem reads as follows:

“The morning sun rises above a sea of clouds. With blowing winds, the radiating clouds move smoothly. My friend has traveled from west to east In a single boat across the ocean for 60 thousand li. Life is just a floating dream. A temporary dwelling is home if one enjoys infinite peace of heart. A dream of home is beyond imagination. When spring comes, it sees no boundaries.”

Ricci arrived in China during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). He brought Western scientific knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and geography. Because of his great contributions to cultural exchanges between East and West, Matteo has become a symbol of the friendship between China and Italy. In 1597, Li Rihua met Matteo in Nanchang. Li wrote

a poem about the friendship between them, which has been passed down. Now, China’s circle of friends has expanded to Europe, America, Africa and all parts of the world.

Sichuan province donated much-needed medical supplies to its international friendship cities, including Pernambuco state in Brazil, Region del Bio-Bio in Chile, Provincia de Buenos Aires in Argentina and Departamento de Lavalleja in Paraguay. Inspirational messages appeared on the packaging of the donations, such as “Flowers blossom for a while, but friendship never fades”; “Paddling through the storm, we are the helping hand of each other”; and “Solidarity is the way of brotherhood.” Those messages conveyed the friendship of the people of Sichuan and traversed the ocean.

On the packaging of donations from leading Chinese businessman Jack Ma to 54 African countries, there appeared the message: “When people are determined, they can overcome anything.”

It was quoted from Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa. It was accompanied by a Chinese sentence that literally translates as “When people are of one mind, they can remove even Mount Tai.” The phrase was borrowed from The Wisdom of Ancient Aphorisms in a metaphor implying that so long as we stay united, we can conquer the pandemic.

Roman philosopher Seneca once said: “We are waves of the same sea,

leaves of the same tree, flowers of the same garden.”

It is true. We are friends among nations and live bequeathed by nature. Poetry is part of culture and human civilization. In the face of the pandemic, culture cheers people up and consolidates faith. Under its banner, people stay united and work selflessly, contribute to the stability of nations and harmony of society and maintain world peace and development.

As CPAFFC President Lin Songtian has said, with a history of 5,000 years, Chinese civilization has its roots in China but belongs to the world. The civilizations of the world each have their own advantages and splendid thoughts. Affinity between the people holds the key to state-to-state relations, while mutual understanding holds the key to people-to-people relations. People-to-people diplomacy will promote mutual learning and common prosperity between Chinese civilization and other civilizations of the world on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Culture nourishes hearts with the warmth of friendship. The CPAFFC will build more platforms for cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, promoting mutual learning between different civilizations and looking forward to people of different countries learning from each other, loving each other and progressing together for building a brighter future for mankind. ■

Memory of days in Central Asia as a diplomat

Zhou Xiaopei

China and Central Asia are contiguous with each other and enjoy strong people-to-people ties. More than 2,000 years ago, Zhang Qian, an envoy of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), was sent to the “western region” twice for peaceful diplomacy, marking the initiation of the ancient Silk Road that featured the “ringing of camel bells and clatter of horse hoofs.”

When the five Central Asian nations announced independence in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, China was one of the first countries to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with them. Historical problems between China and these countries were settled smoothly through diplomatic efforts. Bilateral cooperation has been carried out in energy, transportation and infrastruc-

ture construction, making us good neighbors, friends and partners. The Silk Road Economic Belt was initiated by President Xi Jinping when visiting Central Asia and was met with an enthusiastic response.

As a common saying goes: “Amity between the people holds the key to state-to-state relations, while mutual understanding holds the key to people-to-people relations.” Since their independence, Central Asian countries have achieved great political, social and economic transformations. A better understanding of the different situations in the five countries, and their unique cultural and social customs will undoubtedly increase understanding, trust, cooperation and exchanges between the people of China and Central Asia.

Hospitality of “nations on horseback”

The first time I stepped on Central Asian soil was in 1983. By 1992, I had visited all five of the Central Asian countries in the capacity of diplomatic envoy. In 2003, I was appointed Chinese ambassador to Kazakhstan. In those 40 years or so, I have kept in close contact with Central Asia, whether at home or abroad, and my friendships in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries has remained ever-green.

There are more than 130 ethnic groups in Central Asia. All have had various links with China since ancient times. Major ethnic groups including Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkomen and Uzbeks, whose seasonal migrations in

search of pasture defined their specific nomadism. Their staples are meat and dairy products. They are born with a talent for singing and dancing. And they are known as “nations on horseback”.

In modern times, they have changed their nomadic lifestyle and established permanent settlements. They also converted from primitive faiths to Islam. Most of the people in Central Asia are Sunni Muslims. Only 10 percent of the Tajiks living in Viloyati Mukhtori Kuhistoni Badakhshon of Tajikistan are Shi'ites. Under Russian influence, people in Central Asia are more secular than traditional Muslims. They have a straightforward and uninhibited character. They are passionate and hospitable people, good at singing and dancing. Various kinds of sports and cultural activities are held during festivals, which are a time to play musical instruments, dance and sing, kick shuttlecocks, fly kites, race horses, wrestle, chase girls and goats, wrestle from horseback and demonstrate archery. Generally speaking, there are few differences in the customs of the five countries, but each country has its own characteristics.

The Kazakhstanis are hospitable and treat their guests with the best food they have — for instance slaughtering sheep or other livestock for feasts. In a banquet, they provide their guests with a sheep head,

along with other meat. The Kazakhstanis do not eat pork or animal blood. As a guest, you need to sit cross-legged in their tents, but you need not take off your shoes. You should never step over a string that tethers a domestic animal, and never step across a tablecloth. Friends embrace each other when saying hello or farewell. When men first meet, they warmly shake hands. You should remember not to give alcohol, non-Muslim food or pig-related gifts to a Muslim. Chinese tea and handicrafts are excellent gifts for Kazakhstanis. On formal occasions, name cards should be given, with both hands, on first meetings. When you shake hands with others, you must be the first to hold out your right hand. When they meet a revered person or welcome a guest, the Kazakhstanis put their right hand on the chest, and bend to the waist in expression of good wishes.

In the eyes of Kyrgyzstanis, both strangers met by chance and guests coming from afar are distinguished guests and should be welcomed with hospitality. Guests should have the best food and beds in the household and be cared for by the entire family. If a guest comes by horse, the host should welcome him at doorstep, help him dismount and invite him into the tent. It is considered rude and embarrassing to ask the guests too many ques-

tions, including the purpose of their visit. For close friends, it is customary to exchange gifts. Livestock, hunting birds, horse decorations, leather whips and jewels are among the favorites. In return, people always give others gifts more valuable than what they have received.

The Tajiks attach great importance to rituals, especially those showing respect to the elders. When meeting an elder, young people should enquire after his or her health. Friends and relatives shake hands and stroke beards as gestures of greeting. Even strangers greet each other with thumbs put together. It is considered rude to take off your hat during a conversation.

Female Tajiks have a strong passion for their wardrobe and jewels. Both young and old females wear a rounded embroidered small hat. When out, they usually wear a head scarf on top of the hats. The head scarf is often white. The brides wear red scarves while little girls wear yellow ones. They love jewels made of silver, pearls and jade. The Tajiks worship eagles as symbols of courage and heroism. They adore the color white as a representation of purity, and green for happiness.

According to old Turkmen traditions, the most conspicuous place in a house is occupied by a bitten pie in remembrance of family members sent on an expedition. On certain occasions (a

family banquet for example), Turkmen still follow the nomadic tradition of sitting on the ground. Naan bread, pilaf, roast meat, roast meat pies, deep-fried noodles and steamed stuffed buns are the usual items on their menus. They often have tea and camel milk yogurt in summer. When entertaining a guest, they wouldn't raise any question unless the guest talks first, for they think it is good manners to let the distinguished visitor eat to his/her satisfaction before any talk is initiated. Turkmen never interrupt each other when having a conversation. They never kick up a row. They consider it bad manners to quarrel.

The Uzbeks pay special attention to etiquette and self-cultivation. For men, shaking hands is a gesture of greeting. Before shaking hands, they put the right hand on the chest and bow. Women embrace each other as greeting but they also exercise the bow-and-hand-on-chest etiquette before hugging. The elders may kiss the young on the forehead or cheeks. When visiting an Uzbek family, try to adapt to the host's customs. As a guest, you must have at least one gulp of the served drinks or food, for that's a sign of respect. You must maintain a respectful manner in a conversation. Spitting, belching and coughing are signs of disrespect. In public places, one should be neatly dressed and refined in manner. You should not wear a vest or a pair of

shorts while being a guest or entering a mosque or other public place. When Muslims are in religious services, others present should not move around or speak loudly.

Meat popular in Central Asia

I worked for more than two years in Kazakhstan. The country and its people greatly impressed me. In the Turkic language, "kazakh" means free people, while "stan" means country or place. Kazakhstanis love horses. Horses are their most loyal friends. Horse meat is the favorite on Kazakhstan's festive tables and in daily meals. When I arrived in Kazakhstan, one of my Kazakhstanis friends told me they were the second largest consumer of meat in the world. I asked: "Who's the largest consumer?" He answered: "The wolf."

I was not a lamb eater before I went to Kazakhstan. However, I gradually adapted to it. During a Kazakh reception, boiled lamb is always served as a local specialty. The delicious lamb, accompanied by mutton soup served in a wooden bowl with a wooden spoon, is what people call authentic Kazakh food. When a huge chunk of boiled lamb is served on the table, the host will cut it into smaller pieces and distribute these to the guests. The pelvis and calf are for the respected elders. The breasts are for the sons-in-law and daughters-in-law; the spine bones are

for the girls; the ears for the children. The head, prepared in a special way, is reserved for the most distinguished guest.

Sergey Tereshchenko, the first prime minister after the founding of Kazakhstan, held a lamb reception for me. I was totally at a loss when a sheep head was presented. Tereshchenko taught me to cut a piece of thin skin from the forehead. He said it was the best part of the head. I later came to realize that according to Kazakh customs, the guest should cut a piece of meat from the cheek and present it to the oldest of the family. That being done, he then cut a random part from the head and returned the head to the host. The hosts and guests gathered around, devouring the meat on their plates and drinking the horse milk wine made by the hosts.

The Kyrgyzstanis love eating sheep, horse, beef, camel and yak. Sheep meat is their favorite. A hungry Kyrgyzstani often says he can eat an entire sheep. Kyrgyzstanis apparently eat no less meat than the Kazakhstanis. Like other Muslims, Kyrgyzstanis do not eat pork, dog, donkey, mule, birds of prey or animals that have died a natural death. In the most religious areas, horses, cattle and sheep must be slaughtered by a Muslim to be edible. The Kyrgyzstanis have kept some ancient rituals associated with eating meat. For example, when cooking meat

in an iron pot, they put a radius into the boiling water before putting in the meat cubes. When eating the meat, guests should sit in groups of two, three or four. According to their social rank or family seniority, the hosts provide the guests with a set amount of meat. The guests should dine strictly from their own plates. If there are not enough knives on the table, people may share knives. If you pass along a knife, the hilt should be pointing forward. And if the knife is returned to the host, a meat cube should be on the knife point.

Brand-name cuisine

When Bukhara, an Uzbek city with a history of 2,500 years, was visited by a Chinese delegation led by Qian Qichen, the vice-minister of foreign affairs at the time, the mayor welcomed the group with local specialty pilaf. My first encounter with pilaf confused me. Should I use a knife and fork or bare hands? Seeing my embarrassment, a local official told me to be free to use the tableware. He also said lamb pilaf was the brand-name food of Central Asia and it would be a lifelong pity if I missed the opportunity to have a bite. Now a mere mention of the name pilaf invokes a memory of the captivating flavor.

People in Central Asia and China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous re-

gion all cook pilaf. But Uzbek pilaf is unique in both flavor and cooking method. With regard to cooking methods, there are 20 to 30 different kinds of pilaf, including Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Andijon and Khiva. There is no difference in ingredients, which include lamb, carrots, onions, oil, salt, water and rice, but the pilafs in different cities have different flavors and colors. In Persian, the initial letter of the name of the seven ingredients make the word pilaf. That explains why people call it by that name.

The largest pilaf restaurant in Central Asia is under the Tashkent national TV tower. It is no high-end restaurant, but it attracts citizens and tourists from around the world. It has achieved such fame that business is particularly brisk. Its pilaf is often sold out long before dawn. In September 2017, more than 50 chefs from around Uzbekistan made eight tons of pilaf in a huge pot, setting a new Guinness world record. Uzbekistan also produces canned pilaf for sale abroad, providing an opportunity for people from other countries to have a taste of Uzbek pilaf.

At receptions for National Day or other activities hosted by Central Asian countries, pilaf is always on the menu. On these occasions, retired diplomats like us who have a strong sense of connection to those countries would vie with each other to grab a portion of pilaf we have missed for so long.

Love for beshbarmak and kazy

In Kyrgyzstan, when talking about food, people would ask you questions such as "Have you had any beshbarmak?" and "Do you like beshbarmak?" The name of the dish comes from two Kazakh words: "besh" (five) and "barmak" (finger), meaning "five fingers". It is a combination of boiled lamb or horse meat and noodles. At banquets, beshbarmak is always the most important dish and served as the last one, usually at midnight. In Kazakhstan, beshbarmak is served at weddings and birthday parties. It is called "five fingers" because people take the food by hand. As the traditional food of nomads, beshbarmak reflects the simple way of life of the herdsmen. The soup, made from lamb or horse meat, is seemingly too greasy, but in fact provides enough energy for the herdsmen. Of course, in modern Central Asia, people are no longer nomads, and they use knives and forks instead of their hands when eating beshbarmak.

Kazy is a delicious match for beshbarmak. It is a horse sausage. The sausage is made with meat and fat taken from horse ribs seasoned with garlic, pepper and salt before being stuffed into horse intestines 1 meter long. It is then left to air-dry for days. Kazy is rich in fat, but not greasy. It contains lots of fat and proteins, which looks white and red. It is highly nutritious.

In March 2018, in Kyrgyzstan's

capital, Bishkek, more than 50 chefs worked together to make 1,464 kilograms of beshbarmak, setting a new Guinness world record. They used 13 iron pots and more than 500 kilograms of flour. To match the beshbarmak, they used a kazy 120 meters long, breaking the record set by their Kazakh counterparts in 2015. The Kazakhstani chefs made more than 700 kilos of beshbarmak and a kazy 100 meters long.

The food in Central Asia is rich in meat and fat. The people there love drinking tea, especially black tea, to accompany their food. The tea is not necessarily of high quality but it must be strong enough to offset the fat in the food. They usually put sugar and lemon into the tea. Besides tea, they also like dairy products, including cow milk, yogurt, horse milk and camel milk. The horse milk and camel milk, after fermentation, become a little sour and have a refined taste. They are nutritious and can increase one's resistance to disease.

The unique Nowruz

On Jan 4, 1992, an official Chinese delegation visited Dushanbe, capital of the newly independent Tajikistan. On that day, the two sides reached agreement on establishing diplomatic relations and opening embassies. The Tajik foreign minister hosted a banquet for the Chinese delegation. There, he

spoke with great zest on the history and customs of the Tajik nation. He mentioned the cultural connections between Tajikistanis and Persians. Tajik and Persian are similar languages. Nowruz, the Tajik spring festival, has its origin in ancient Persia with a history of 2,700 years. In the ancient Persian calendar, March 21 marks the end of the year and the beginning of a new one. On that day, people visit their friends and relatives and give each other early spring flowers as presents. That was the first time I heard about Nowruz.

Every year on the day of Vernal equinox, Central Asian countries celebrate Nowruz, the most important festival of the year, similar to China's Spring Festival. In February 2010, the UN designated March 21 as International Nowruz Day. Xinhua.com once used "five mosts" to describe how people in Central Asia celebrated the Nowruz.

Kazakhstan: The most delicious Nowruz

On Nowruz eve, every family is busy preparing festival dishes. The most important of those dishes is the traditional Nowruz porridge made of rice, millet, wheat grains, flour, cheese, beef and lamb. Though the festival menus in five Central Asian countries comprise thousands of dishes, the Nowruz porridge is the most au-

thentic. On Nowruz, people gather at home, enjoying the Nowruz porridge made by the mother. They also have kazy, zhal (smoked horse neck bacon) and chopped horse meat sausage to accompany the wine. They welcome the spring in a happy and peaceful atmosphere, enjoying the sweetness of home.

Kyrgyzstan: The most authentic Nowruz

When it comes to celebrating Nowruz, unlike its Central Asian neighbors, Kyrgyzstan has maintained the ancient ritual of starting a fire and requiring every male member of the family to jump over it to wish the family members health. They believe that fire, hot and sacred, keeps people pure and healthy. This custom indicates that the assumption Nowruz originates from Zoroastrianism is not sheer conjecture. Given this understanding, Kyrgyz think their way of celebrating Nowruz to be the most ancient, traditional and authentic.

Tajikistan: The most creative Nowruz

The celebration of Nowruz in Tajikistan in 2015 is most creative. President Emomali Rahmon approved the logo that was specially designed for

Nowruz by a domestic designer. It has a background of green fields, with a circle in the middle representing Earth, sunrays representing spring and tender sprouts of plants representing newborn life. Under the Earth, there are ribbons patterned after the Tajik national flag. The government used the logo to decorate the sites of Nowruz celebrations. It was also used to make pins to be worn by the Tajikistani people during Nowruz. Probably, this Nowruz logo made in Tajikistan will one day become popular around the world.

Turkmenistan: The most international Nowruz

Since 2010, the Central Asia countries have hosted international Nowruz celebrations in turn. On March 21, 2013, the fourth International Nowruz Day was held in Ashkabad, capital of Turkmenistan. Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, and the presidents of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan, as well as high-level representatives from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, attended the event. Ban Ki-moon, UN secretary-general, sent a letter of congratulations and his representative was also present. Turkmenistan has used the event to promote multilateral diplomacy, an important step in the country's internationalization.

Uzbekistan: The highest-ranking Nowruz

Uzbekistan holds a great ceremony to celebrate Nowruz in its capital Tashkent annually on March 21. Uzbek political elites and celebrities from various social circles gather for the event. Major TV networks broadcast live. Granted the highest status, the event's influence and popularity can only be matched by Chinese *Chunwan*, or the Spring Festival Eve gala. Such a great event must be attended by heavy-weight guests. Since the country's independence, the president has attended the celebration every year and invited guests from foreign diplomatic missions. Apart from delivering a speech, the president will always step onto the center of the stage to sing and dance with artists from various ethnic groups. He will also talk to the audience, conveying the warmth of the festival to the Uzbek public.

Rashid Alimov and Parviz Davlatzoda, the former and incumbent Tajik ambassadors to China respectively, are my friends. They held Nowruz celebrations in Beijing every year in a ceremonious and enthusiastic atmosphere. Besides offering traditional food, the events included art performances, such as poetry readings, and were highly welcomed. Ambassadors of member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, leading officials from

the Foreign Ministry and old friends, such as we who have worked in Central Asia, were invited to attend the events. Nowruz has become a popular event where friends from home and abroad can meet and communicate in a friendly atmosphere.

Ferghana horses as state gifts

When working at the Chinese embassy in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, I heard about the Ferghana horses in Turkmenistan. Ferghana horses, which I had never been able to see, were recorded in Chinese history. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, I was sent on official missions to Turkmenistan twice and finally had the opportunity to see and ride under the guidance of the owner. In my later published memoir on my diplomatic career, I wrote about the legendary stories of the Ferghana horses.

The Ferghana horses are regarded as the best horses in the world. They have strong bodies, run fast and are capable of understanding humans. Turkmen ancestors spent thousands of years training and raising the breed. As the Turkmen proverb goes: "The first thing you do after you wake up is say good morning to your father, and then say good morning to your horse." It vividly depicts the status of horses at home. When a horse is born, it is named as though it were a newborn human. Each

horse has its own name, as well as a posterity of names for its sons, daughters, grandsons and great grandsons. Every horse has a pedigree. The horses are raised under the care of the entire family. Their close connections with humans when growing up gradually endow them with the ability to understand their masters. When the masters run into danger, they will come to the rescue.

According to Records of the Historian, when Zhang Qian returned from his trip to the western region, he reported: "The Kingdom of Dawan has good horses. Their bodies perspire blood." For the past 2,000 years, the mysterious horse has been known in China as the "blood-perspiring horse". In 112 BC, someone from Dunhuang presented a Ferghana horse to Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty. The emperor, extremely pleased by the gift, called it "the horse of heaven" and wrote a poem:

"A heavenly horse has been bestowed upon us by the God of Polaris. Its body is wet with bloody sweat dripping down in foamy streams. It gallops beating a path stretching more than 10,000 li. Once a friend of dragons in the celestial world, it now must succumb to the fate of being a harnessed animal."

The emperor was so fond of the horse that he dispatched a delegation of 100 people to get more, carrying with them a golden horse in an attempt to

trade with Dawan for a stallion. The king of Dawan refused the emperor's request. Worse still, he killed the Han envoys and robbed them of their treasures. Greatly enraged by the insult, Emperor Wudi ordered his army to seize the Ferghana horses by force, which led to two wars. In 647, Ogus-Karakitays gave Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty a herd of Ferghana horses, from which 10 were selected to be named "winged steeds". In the third year of Tianbao (742-756), the Tang empire changed the name of the kingdom Dawan to Ningyuan, and married Princess Yihe to the King of Ningyuan, who presented two Ferghana horses to the emperor. The two animals were given the names Jade Face and Night-Shining White by the emperor. They were depicted in two famous Tang Dynasty paintings, Night-Shining White and Jade Face.

Ferghana horses, of noble birth, are among the most ancient horse breeds. Ferghana horses, Arabians and English thoroughbreds are the purest blood. Presidents of Turkmenistan have given Ferghana horses as state gifts to Chinese leaders three times. The breed that had been lost in eyes of Chinese people for thousands of years finally returned to China traveling via the ancient Silk Road. The horse is a happy memory of peace, friendship and cooperation between the people of the two countries.

More than 2,000 years ago, our ancestors built this Silk Road stretching across Eurasian continent for over 5,000 kilometers. Chinese tea, silk and porcelain were transported to Persia and Arabia. Pepper, walnuts, horses and carrots produced in the western region entered ordinary Chinese households. With blossoming trade, countries along the Silk Road enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. The Silk Road not only strengthened economic links between the countries, but also cultural exchanges. Different cultures connected with and learned from each other along the Silk Road. The cultures developed themselves in an atmosphere of inclusiveness and diversity. Over thousands of years, the Silk Road has helped people in this region nurture a friendship that will be carried on from generation to generation.

The ancient Silk Road has stood the test of time, and it has new meanings in a new era. The Belt and Road Initiative is now writing a new chapter in history. ■

(The author is former Director General of the Department of European-Central Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Chinese ambassador to Kazakhstan.)

Nara, living grandeur of the Tang Dynasty

Yang Le

Author's Note:

2020 marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of friendship cities between Yangzhou and Nara.

Nara is the ancient capital of Japan and the spiritual home of the Japanese people. Its historical link with Yangzhou started with Master Jianzhen (688-733), a monk in China's Tang Dynasty.

Since the 1990s, the municipal governments of the two cities have paid friendly mutual visits many times, carrying out extensive exchanges and cooperation in trade, economics, culture and tourism.

From May 6 to 10, 2008, at the invitation of the Japanese government, China's president, Hu Jintao, paid a five-day state visit to Japan, which came to be known as the "warm spring visit" in the two countries' relations. In response to China's overall diplomacy, Yangzhou commissioned a ship model named the Ship of Friendship as a state gift. The gift ship was based on the historical ship that had carried Master Jianzhen from China to Japan.

Yangzhou, hometown of Jianzhen, also dispatched a civilian friendship delegation to Nara. President Hu spoke highly of the group and took a photo with members in front of the Ship of Friendship. Yang Jiechi, the foreign minister at the time, praised the model prepared by Yangzhou as the best and most significant state gift and an important symbol of the friendship between the two countries.

On Feb 20, 2010, Nara Mayor Motonobu Nakagawa made his first visit to Yangzhou in an attempt to forge a lasting friendship. The Yangzhou mayor at the time, Xie Zhengyi, signed a memorandum of understanding with his Nara counterpart.

On May 23 that year, Executive Vice-Mayor Zhang Aijun of Yangzhou, on his visit to Japan, signed a declaration with Nara Mayor Nakagawa in the Centennial Hall of Nara, marking the official establishment of friendship city ties between Yangzhou and Nara. Approximately 400 people attended the signing ceremony, including Governor Shogo Arai of Nara Prefecture, President Kiyoshi Yamamoto of the Nara City Council, Consul General Zheng Xianglin of China in Osaka and other representatives from the Nara city government, including representatives of the city council, chamber of commerce, industry, civil organizations and others.

Since the establishment of friendship city relations, Yangzhou and Nara have worked hand-in-hand with common aspirations, helping each other while making progress, promoting common development and prosperity, and contributing positively to the friendship between the people of the two cities and two countries for generations to come.

This year not only marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of friendship cities relations between the two cities but also the 1,310th anniversary of Nara serving as Japan's capital, and the 1,250th anniversary of the founding of the Toshodai-ji temple by the monk Jianzhen in Nara. This article intends to offer the readers a glimpse at the enchanting, picturesque and poetic Nara.

A glimpse at the enchanting, picturesque and poetic Nara

If I were a time traveler, I would choose to visit the Tang Dynasty, which I find to be the most captivating period of Chinese history.

Nara, Japan, which is dipped in unique Tang style, carries the liveliest

memories of the dynasty.

Historically known as Yamato Province, Nara is the most famous ancient capital of Japan. From 655 to 784 AD, Japanese emperors chose it as their capital, which was known as Heijo-

kyo. The period between 710 and 789 is also known as the Nara period. During the Northern and Southern Courts period in Japan, Nara was where the Southern Court resided. Modern Nara occupies the left capital of ancient Heijo-kyo. The classical style of Heijo-kyo has been well preserved, making Nara a popular tourist destination. Nara is also one of the birthplaces of ancient Japanese culture known as Tempyo culture. In 1950, Nara was awarded the title of international tourist and cultural city. It has multiple cultural relics including Heijo-kyo relics, imperial mausoleums, the Todai-ji Temple, Toshodai-ji Temple, Horyu-ji Temple and Nara Park. Japanese people regard Nara as their spiritual home.

The connection between Yangzhou and Nara started with Buddhism. About 1,200 years ago, during China's Tang Dynasty, in the second year of Tianbao (743 AD), the monk Jianzhen of Daming Temple in Yangzhou, at the invitation of Japanese Buddhists and accompanied by his disciples, embarked on a trip to Japan. He made six attempts within 10 years, during which



Todai-ji Temple

time he suffered much and lost his eyesight. He finally arrived in Nara in 753. It was said his arrival lit the night sky of Nara like the moon.

While in Japan, Jianzhen promoted the culture of the Tang Dynasty in its prime. Japanese writer Inoue Yasushi told the story of Jianzhen in his novel *The Roof of Tempyo*. Japanese people paid their respects to Jianzhen by calling him *The Roof of Tempyo*, meaning his contributions to Tempyo culture were second to none.

Yangzhou was definitely the starting place of China-Japan friendship. On Feb 20, 2010, newly elected Nara Mayor Motonobu Nakagawa made his first visit to Yangzhou in an attempt to forge a lasting friendship and sign an MOU on promoting friendly exchanges. On May 23, the two cities signed a declaration in the Centennial Hall of Nara establishing friendship city relations.

Ten years have now passed. I visited Nara once, and apart from official businesses, I toured the Todai-ji Temple and Toshodai-ji Temple, having an exhilarating experience, as if returning to the Tang Dynasty in a dream.

Todai-ji Temple was named based on its location east of Heijo-kyo. It is the major monastery and temple belonging to the Kegon sect of Buddhism in Japan. It is also known as Kinshoji Temple. It was erected by order of the emperor Shomu in 728, who himself believed in Buddhism. A construction of grand scale, it was completed in 798. To celebrate its erection, a dedication ceremony in honor of the great Bud-

dha was held at the Todai-ji Temple. Emperor Emeritus Shomu, Empress Emeritus Komyo, Empress Koken, court officials and more than 10,000 monks attended the ceremony during which court dances and the music of kumi, togaku, komagaku and Nihonfue were performed. It was regarded as the grandest religious event to take place after Buddhism was introduced into Japan.

Jianzhen established an ordination platform at Todai-ji. The hall for the ordination of monks, the kaidan'in, to the west of the daibutsuden (great Buddha hall) was where he used to reside.

In 1998, as a relic of ancient Nara, Todai-ji Temple was named a UNESCO world heritage site.

According to Todaiji records, the temple was built in a forest at the foot of Mount Wakakusa, amid a refreshing and tranquil environment. Despite its scale, the temple was kept clean, without litter. The front gate or nandaimon, a national treasure, is the largest temple gate in Japan, standing 25 meters tall and 50 meters wide. Its architectural style is known as "great Buddha style" (daibutsuyo) or "Indian style" (tenjikuyo). The towering wooden gate stands as a hybrid of purity, antiquity and mystery.

The road leading to the gate has been considered one of the most beautiful walking trails of Nara. The surrounding area was dotted with lovely sika deer in small groups. Some of them idly strolled lanes paved with stones. Others knelt beneath the trees, resting in the shade. Naturally they

drew the complete attention of passersby.

Legend has it that deer are the true residents of Nara. Revered as messengers of gods and symbols of good luck, the deer in this place had ascended above others in social status. They would stalk tourists for biscuits, creating a special scene of interest. People would feed the deer and take pictures with them. What a heartwarming picture, speaking eloquently of the harmony between mankind, animals and nature!

This was vividly depicted by Chinese writer Lao She in his poem *Todai-ji Temple of Nara*: Pagodas cast shadows on the dustless ground in the light of the Buddha. Cherry blossoms dot the picture drawn in early spring. The visitor had to leave after trespassing upon every inch of soil underneath the pines. The young deer were so attached to him that he felt reluctant to part.

The daibutsuden, or great Buddha hall, of Todai-ji Temple, with its front width of 57 meters and a depth of 50 meters, is the largest wooden construction in the world. A colossal bronze statue of Buddha Birushana was installed in the daibutsuden. It is 15 meters high and took 437 tons of bronze and 130 kilograms of gold to build.

A pillar stands beside the statue with a square hole at its base called the enlightenment hole. It was exactly the size of the nostril of the statue. According to legend, if you could crawl through the hole, you would return to your original nature with all sins washed away and you would be free

from all worries and distresses, be joyful and have infinite blessings and good fortune.

I noticed that small children were happy to crawl through the hole, and some adults were willing to have a try, wishing to be enlightened and blessed.

Among the famous Todai-ji buildings, there were the Nigatsu-do (Second Month Hall), the Sangatsudo (Third Month Hall) and the Shosoin Repository. All these buildings are masterpieces of architecture with immense aesthetic value.

Todai-ji Temple is known for its simple architectural style. The wooden structures of the buildings have stood the test of time, even surviving fires. The conspicuous burn marks and rusted metal furnishings all speak of its history. In the eyes of the Japanese people, the older an object is, the more important it is to preserve its original look, because it is a precious gift left by history. Such a concept deserves our careful thought also.

Toshodaiji temple is the head temple of the Ritsu sect of Japanese Buddhism. Jianzhen started building it in 759, the third year of Tempyo-hoji. The construction was completed in approximately 770. The temple preserved the architectural style of a flourishing period of the Tang Dynasty and has been regarded a national treasure of Japan and named a UNESCO world heritage site.

Walking through the front gate, you will find a colossal rock standing by the long avenue with inscriptions introducing the temple. Proceeding past

the rock, you will see the Toshodaijikondo, or main hall. The kondō, built on a stone platform 1 meter high, has seven rooms — a room being the length between two pillars — in the front and four rooms on the sides. It was the largest and most beautiful building in Japan's Tempyo period.

In his remarks on Tang buildings, Chinese architect Liang Sicheng said: “The magnificent bracket, the protruding eaves and the softly sloping roof are all demonstrations of stability and solemnity. The power inherent in these buildings is proof of the prosperity and vitality of that age.”

It was a perfect example of a Tang building, Liang added: “For a researcher of Tang buildings, the

Toshodaijikondo offers the best example.”

The main image housed within the Toshodaijikondo was Buddha Rushana, flanked by the Medicine Buddha and Thousand-Armed Bodhisattva. All are masterpieces of gilded lacquer sculpture.

In front of them were two smaller figures of Brahma and Indrah and four wooden sculptures of the Four Heavenly Kings, the guardian gods who watch over the four cardinal directions of Earth. There was also a wooden sculpture of Buddha Rushana dating to the early Heian Period. The Toshodaijikondo, along with the sculptures of Buddha Rushana, Medicine Buddha and Thousand-



Toshodaiji temple

Armed Bodhisattva inside are all national treasures of Japan.

The mieido (hall of the found's image), built in 1688, housed a statue of Jianzhen that showed the stature of the monk when he died. In the spring of the seventh year of Tempyo-hoji (AD 763), when cherry flowers in Toshodaiji and viburnum flowers in Daming temple of Yangzhou were all blossoming, Jianzhen in Nara felt as if his face were being caressed by breeze from his hometown on the Jianghuai Plain, and he could distantly hear the waves beating the banks of the canal when he was on board the ship sailing for Japan.

On May 6, when the moon lit the

dark sky, Jianzhen sat cross-legged, laying both hands, one underneath the other, palms up, thumbs pointing at each other, flat on his legs, facing west. In this posture, he breathed his last breath, with eyes closed and a smile on his face. West was where his hometown Yangzhou was.

The tomb of monk Jianzhen lay to the east of the mieido. Around the tomb were pines and various kinds of flowers, including osmanthus, peony, "Sun Yatsen lotus", dancing maids lotus, Toshodaiji lotus, Japan-China friendship lotus and viburnum flowers from Yangzhou.

As a Japanese poem reads:
"Though with different mountains and

rivers, under the same sky we stand." As a native of Yangzhou myself, I wondered what I could do on behalf of our common hometown to honor the memory of Jianzhen. I decided to recite the poem *A Moonlit Night on the Spring River* by Zhang Ruoxu, a poet of the same era as the master monk, and also from Yangzhou. The poem reads:

Spring river meets tides at estuary
to the sea;

The moon rises as the tides surge.

Rolling waves sweep thousands
of miles

while the moon sees its reflection
on the sea.

Generation after generation come
and go;

The moon casts its light over the
river year after year.

With those lines in mind, I walked past every building, every tree, grass and flower of Toshodaiji until dusk.

Nara, though a sea away from China, preserves authentic images of Tempyo and the flourishing period of the Tang Dynasty. Master Jianzhen has made a great contribution to Japanese culture and the architectural style of Nara.

Guo Moruo speaks highly of Jianzhen's contribution in his poem which reads:

"Though blind, Jianzhen navigated the eastern sea. His faith has illuminated the sky. He sacrificed himself for the benefit of others and helped spread the truth. As part of his achievements, you can now witness living grandeur of



The tomb of monk Jianzhen

Tang Dynasty in Nara.”

At some point, Japan shifted its cultural center from Tang culture to its own and focused more on tapping into its own culture than on imitating Tang institutions. The change meant that Japan’s assimilation of Chinese culture stopped at the Tang Dynasty. Subsequently, the living grandeur of the Tang Dynasty that I witnessed in Nara is in fact a Japanese exposition of the history of China’s Tang Dynasty.

Another poem reads:

“Nara, what a beautiful city! Simplicity is better than luxury. You’d better visit those famous gardens on a moonlit night. Walk idly in your geta shoes until they turn as heavy as a coach. These beautiful words will merit your praise.”

When you walk the streets of Nara, you can see no skyscrapers, no throngs of shoppers and no commuters in a rush. The imprint of the Tang Dynasty can be found in people’s ordinary lives. The ancient capital, the dreamy grandeur of the Tang and the breath of air from generations ago is still so fresh and full of energy. I could feel the existence of the Tang Dynasty and it was close at hand and breathing into my face.

I could barely tear myself away from Nara — from its Tang style and antiquity. I’m eager to visit again, not once but 100 times and even more. I hope over the course of my life that I could more than once, and in a more careful manner, visit the city of Nara and enjoy the living grandeur of the Tang Dynasty. ■

Mutual support adds to warmth of friendship

—Stories behind China-Tajikistan translation team on COVID-19 response and health care information

Cai Yunzhe

On April 30, bad news broke the tranquility of Tajikistan. The Ministry of Health announced the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, with 15 cases confirmed. Much to

people’s disappointment, this peaceful Central Asian country didn’t escape the epidemic. Bewildered youngsters resorted to social media and found quite a few videos on disease



Yan Minjia, a Chinese doctoral student from the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University, founded the translation team.

prevention and control. In one of them, a Chinese person explains in simply terms in Tajik. The videos were made by the China-Tajikistan translation team to address the response to COVID-19 and provide healthcare information. To the local people, the knowledge dissemination service was reassuring.

The translation team is an online volunteer organization composed of more than 60 volunteers from China, Tajikistan, Iran and other countries. Using a trove of documents about China's response, the team distributed knowledge of the virus to Tajikistanis via the internet. Behind those videos stood the volunteers' hard work — close online collaboration in compiling data, translating, revising and dubbing. The team was set up on April 15 when confirmed cases had been found among Tajik people living in Russia. Soon after the outbreak in Tajikistan, the team presented the first videos to the public.

Yan Minjia, a Chinese doctoral student from the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University, founded the translation team. Her experience in learning the Tajik language and her friendship with Tajik teachers and schoolmates gave her a love for the country. The threat imposed by the pandemic to the Tajik people motivated her to help others. She asked Chen Binin, a schoolmate who had initiated a China-Iran COVID-19 prevention assistance group, how to run a volunteer organization online.

Then she went into action. Through open recruitment and personal recommendations, volunteers from different places joined the team. Xia Ran, a Chinese student who speaks fluent Tajik, ran the team's WeChat account Tajiko. Mehraj, busy with her graduate curriculum at Nationalities University of Tajikistan, always managed to find time for subtitle revisions. Farzina, an international student at Beijing University of Technology, was in charge of editing the videos. Arya Farjand, an Iranian

volunteer who dubbed the videos into Tajik, was so dedicated to his task that he would even apologize for his Farsi accent.

Following the Chinese practices that had proven effective against COVID-19, these talented students were doing everything they could to save as many lives and help as many families as possible.

Selecting footage was the first step in the team's work. On the website of National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China were plenty



The translation team having a video conference.

of informative videos on the disease prevention and control. Topics ranged from the symptoms of COVID-19 to prevention and control measures in various situations — from medical care for children to mental care for health workers; from disinfectant formulations to national health care policies.

The group chose more than 60 topics from the website and adapted them to fit the epidemic situation in Tajikistan and its people's needs. Headings included "Liquor cannot prevent one from contracting COVID-19" and "Misuse of disinfectant is dangerous".

Next came translation, revision and editing, done by different volunteers based on their specialties and interests. Sometimes they consulted experts for the correct translations of words or phrases that were difficult to translate from Chinese to Tajik.

Months of hard work paid off. More than 40 videos made by the team received many likes and favorable reviews on social media in Tajikistan.

Even though some of the volunteers had never met, they were brought together by a shared commitment. While they lived far apart and spoke different languages, they were connected by their good hearts.

A few sets of ordinary PCs, a few copies of worn-out dictionaries and a number of warm hearts pooled to create greater combined power and provide mutual support in times of difficulty. Bridges were built that joined people in friendship. ■

Inheritance is best way to commemorate late president of Sri Lanka China Society

Sun Yajing

On June 5, 2020, I was grieved to learn of the passing away of Amaradasa Gunawardana, president of the Sri Lanka China Society, at the age of 89. Though I had had only two face-to-face meetings with him in the past, I was deeply impressed by his character and colorful life experience.

Gunawardana was born in 1931 to a well-educated family. Both his parents were teachers. Because of his talent and diligence, he was admitted to one of the top universities in Sri Lanka, Peradenia University, and majored in Sinhala. After graduation, he served as a teacher at his alma mater for a short term and was then selected as a civil

servant in 1959. He took important positions in Agrarian Service Department, Finance and Policy Planning Ministry and a few other departments. He also once served as deputy ambassador to Australia.

The close affinity between Gunawardana and China dates from 1981. On Oct 5, 1981, together with several like-minded colleagues in the Finance and Policy Planning Ministry, he founded the Sri Lanka China Society and served as its president from 1989 until his death.

Looking back on Gunawardana's original purpose in founding the society, Jinith De Silva, the current act-

ing president, said it derived from the former president's admiration of the long history of the friendship between Sri Lanka and China. Silva noted that Fa Xian, a distinguished monk of the East Jin Dynasty (317-420) had studied Buddhism in Sri Lanka and brought Buddhist scriptures back to China. The stone tablet erected in Galle by Zheng He, the great voyager of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was kept at the Colombo National Museum. That kind of close, long-term friendship between the two countries was deeply rooted in Gunawardana's mind and motivated him to establish the society, which is aimed at promoting friendship between Sri Lanka and China, Silva said.

Gunawardana, with his brilliant mind and foresight, had long worked to advance the cause of bilateral friendship. As early as 1988, he suggested to the Chinese embassy that a Chinese Cultural Center be set up in Sri Lanka. However, because of the national situation in Sri Lanka at the time, the proposal didn't become reality until 2014. After the establishment of the center, the Sri Lanka China Society has been an active participant in and supporter for its activities.

With his leadership, in recent years the society and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries co-hosted the Chinese Character Exhibition, the Selected Chinese Folk Arts Exhibition, the China and Sri Lanka in the Eyes of

Photographers Exhibition Series and various forms of cultural exchanges. All these cooperative activities have enhanced mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries. I remember that during my visit to Sri Lanka with the Chinese photographers in 2017 for the photography exchange program, Gunawardana received us personally, with respect for the Chinese guests and enthusiasm for the program. It was a most friendly conversation. I still remember his smiling face and good words that day.

Gunawardana was devoted to displaying the real China to Sri Lankan leaders and its people. On Oct 2, 2008, he presented the first copy of the book *People's China* written in Sinhala to Sri Lanka's president at the time, Mahinda Rajapaksa. The book was edited by the Sri Lanka China Society to introduce China's history, culture, economy and other aspects. Besides the first copy given to the president, many others were distributed in Sri Lankan schools for free, generating good social effects.

What touched me most is that in 2019, at the age of 88, Gunawardana served as editor-in-chief of the Sinhala edition of the first volume of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China to better disseminate the philosophy of a new form of international relations characterized by mutual respect, fairness, justice and mutual benefit, as well as the building of a community with a shared future for mankind initiated by

Chinese President Xi Jinping. On Nov 5, 2019, the first edition — more than 10,000 copies — was distributed to Sri Lankan universities and high school libraries to help them better understand China and Xi's thoughts on governance. When I heard that, I was deeply moved by Gunawardana's decades of persistence in advancing friendship between Sri Lanka and China.

Gunawardana's contribution to his own country and to Sri Lanka-China friendship was well recognized both at home and in China. In 2007, when Sri Lanka and China celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, he was honored with the Contribution to China-Sri Lanka Friendship award by the CPAFFC. On March 20, 2017, he was awarded the title Desamanya (Light to the nation) by the Sri Lankan president, Maithripala Sirisena, in acknowledgement of his distinguished contribution to the country's development. Words like down-to-earth, wise, devoted and friendly are not enough to describe his 89 years.

Cherishing his legacy is the best commemoration. I believe Gunawardana's spirit of devotion to Sri Lanka-China friendship will live on. In this way, I believe the Sri Lanka China Society will contribute to the blossoming of Sri Lanka-China friendship under the leadership of Jinith De Silva, joined by other friendly people. ■

A Love for China: George Hatem and Hans Mueller

Liu Guozhong

Two medical doctors, George Hatem, an American, and Hans Mueller, a German, made their way to China in the 1930s. They became close friends and comrades and remained so for half a century since their first meeting in Yan'an.

Both participated in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, they devoted themselves to health services. They not only saved lives, but also actively participated in the training of medical talent to serve the general public of China.

Both joined the Communist Party of China, obtained Chinese citizenship, were elected as members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, actively promoted international exchanges and cooperation in China's health services and served the cause of international friendship and peace.

Having lived and worked in China for more than half a century, they became Chinese nationals and forged deep friendships with the Chinese people. Their work was acknowledged and commended by the Chinese government and people. The Ministry of

Health awarded Hatem the title "Pioneer in the Medical and Health Services of New China" and named Mueller an "Outstanding International Medical Soldier".

Devoted to defeating Japan and liberating China

Hatem was of Lebanese descent and born in New York on Sept 26, 1910. After receiving his doctor's degree in medicine from the University of Geneva in 1933, he went to Shanghai to gain experience in tropical and

venereal diseases, which were rife in the port city. It was there he met Rewi Alley, Agnes Smedley and others who sympathized and supported the Chinese revolution. He joined a Marxism study group of foreigners in Shanghai, met Soong Ching Ling and developed a deep sympathy for the Chinese revolution. In 1936, he accepted Soong Ching Ling's recommendation and went to Yan'an with American journalist Edgar Snow. After making a field study of the medical and health conditions in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region, he chose to stay to serve China's revolutionary cause. While working in northern Shaanxi, he often reported to the Grand Alliance for the Defense of China led by Soong Ching Ling on the situation in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region, appealed to the international community through the alliance and actively sought international assistance for medical equipment and medicines urgently needed in the region to support the Chinese revolution.

In February 1937, Hatem was sent to the war front of the Eighth Route Army in Shanxi province, where he applied to join the Communist Party of China. At the end of that year, after returning to Yan'an, he made an effort with the Department of Health and medical staff to establish health clinics directly under the department — the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region

Hospital and the Eighth Route Army Hospital (later renamed Bethune International Peace Hospital), following the principle of making do with whatever is available in a do-it-yourself and thrifty manner. At that time — in addition to the formal clinic in hospitals — barracks, schoolyards, village squares, spots under a tree or at the edge of a field all became his informal clinics.

In the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, he was never afraid of getting dirty, tired or infected, and he always treated soldiers and ordinary people as equals. He said a doctor should look for patients, not wait for them to visit.

Hatem was a man of integrity and noble medical ethics who had a strong sense of responsibility and was popular with the general public.

Hans Mueller was born in Dusseldorf, Germany, on Jan 13, 1915. In 1939, he received his doctor's degree of medicine from the University of Basel, Switzerland. To escape the persecution of the Nazis, he went to China to fight fascism. He established ties with the Grand Alliance for the Defense of China in Hong Kong and then traveled to Yan'an with a medical supply delivery team organized by the alliance and the Eighth Route Army Office in Hong Kong. In Yan'an, he met Hatem for the first time. After discussion, the leader of the Department of Health arranged for Hatem to work as a surgeon at Bet-

hune International Peace Hospital. Before long, Hatem requested to be sent to the frontline of the war. He said, "the direct enemies a medical worker has to fight are death, disease and disability, and his duty is to protect the health of our soldiers."

After being approved by the organization, Mueller and an Indian medical team arrived at the Eighth Route Army headquarters in Wang Jiayu, Wuxiang county, on Dec 21, 1939, after 50 days of traveling. At that time, the General Hospital of the Eighth Route Army was poorly equipped and badly in need of medicine, but Mueller soon plunged into his work with great enthusiasm and won the trust of everyone with his excellent medical skills. He fought in the Taihang Mountain anti-Japanese base area for three years, and then returned to Yan'an for health reasons and worked at International Peace Hospital until the victory. After the war, Health Department Director Su Jingguan of the Eighteenth Group Army wrote a service certificate saying, "M.D. Hans Mueller, who is also an army major, has worked as a surgeon and chief physician in the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region International Peace Hospital, supervising surgeons and physicians at Southeastern Shanxi International Peace Hospital, captain of the mobile surgical team of the Health Department of the Eighteenth Group Army, medical

consultant of the Southeast Shanxi 129 Division [and] showing his boundless devotion to the service which has been thoroughly accomplished and should be given full credit.”

After the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Hatem and Mueller took an active part in the Chinese People’s War of Liberation. In 1946, Hatem served as a medical adviser to the Communist Party of China delegation participating in the work of the Executive Contingent of the Military Affairs Mediation Commission, which consisted of military members from the United States, the Kuomintang and the CPC. His task was to check the English translations of memoranda. Later, he contacted the United Nations Relief Agency and the American Red Cross in the capacity of medical consultant of the Relief Association of the Liberated Areas of China and lobbied to gain their support for the liberated areas. Throughout the War of Liberation, Hatem, with his loyalty to the cause of the CPC and outstanding diplomatic talent, made important contributions to the victory of the Chinese people’s revolution.

After the surrender of Japan in 1945, Mueller was given leave to return to Germany for a reunion with his family. However, because of the outbreak of the civil war, his trip was blocked and he was invited to serve as direc-

tor of the Field General Hospital of the Hebei-Chahar-Rehe-Liaoning Military Area. In August 1946, after the civil war was at full scale, Mueller led the whole medical staff of the hospital and arrived in Linxi town, Inner Mongolia after more than three months of hard fighting, together with the Hebei-Rehe-Liaoning Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, the Hebei-Rehe-Liaoning Military Area Command and the Rehe provincial government.

Upon their arrival, Mueller led his medical staff to treat and nurse a large number of the sick and wounded who had been transferred from the battlefield in Hebei, Rehe and Liaoning. Although medical conditions at that time were very poor, Mueller tried his best to solve all kinds of problems in treatment. He led the medical staff in carrying out field rescue work under a hail of bullets, tried hard to save the lives of soldiers and the masses, trained medical staff and made other contributions to the War of Liberation.

Promote development of health care in New China

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Hatem was employed as a consultant to the Ministry of Health and actively participated in the prevention and treatment of vene-

real and skin diseases. In 1954, he was transferred to the newly established Central Institute of Dermatology (predecessor of the Institute of Dermatology of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences), which was responsible for the research and technical guidance in the prevention and treatment of venereal diseases, leprosy and tinea capitis. At the institute, he successively served as head of the prevention and treatment research group and director of the leprosy laboratory.

To treat venereal disease, he suggested that the institute send medical teams to minority areas on the frontier to train a few people in every community how to recognize the symptoms of venereal disease, and then let them teach local residents and persuade them to come out for testing and treatment. The institute followed Hatem’s advice, and he himself served as head of a medical team to combat venereal disease in frontier minority areas.

Throughout the 1950s and into the first two or three years of the 1960s, the medical team visited ethnic minority areas twice a year, each time staying three months. During Hatem’s tenure, the medical team went to Inner Mongolia, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Tibet and Xinjiang and worked closely with local medical personnel to carry out on-site prevention and control research,

epidemiological investigations and grassroots training in a planned and organized way.

Hatem never complained about the hardships of working at the grassroots level. At the end of the day, he would work with local officials to plan the next move or summarize their recent work. If anything was unfinished, he would do it himself. In some places where conditions were especially poor, he could always find ways to do a good job by strictly following the standards of medical treatment and research.

In the prevention and treatment of venereal disease and leprosy, he presided over research on methods of discovering patients and exercising comprehensive treatment and prevention, as well as clinical diagnosis and treatment technologies. The research achieved excellent results and the technologies were promoted and applied nationwide.

The scientific research achievements of the team led by Hatem were recognized with the Group Work Award at the National Scientific Conference in 1978.

In practice, Hatem not only changed the traditional methods of isolation and treatment for leprosy according to China's national conditions but also introduced new foreign technologies for treating leprosy in 1980. In addition, he and a few other experts were first to put forward China's plan

to eliminate leprosy. He made every effort to promote the plan.

To bring up successors in the cause of leprosy rehabilitation, he trained medical workers specializing in prevention and control. He also organized a number of seminars at the China Leprosy Prevention and Control Research Center and invited well-known domestic and foreign experts to give leprosy rehabilitation lessons.

In the name of the Chinese Association of Leprosy Control, Hatem entrusted the Institute of Dermatovenereal Diseases, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, to carry out epidemiological and social medical research on leprosy deformities. He went abroad many times, negotiated with friendly foreign groups and won support in various aspects, including the introduction of drugs, medical equipment and technology, and the training of personnel, which created a favorable condition for China to accelerate the realization of basically eliminating leprosy. He laid a good foundation for China's leprosy rehabilitation work.

In 1988, the Ministry of Health honored Hatem as a "Pioneer in the Medical and Health Services of New China".

After the founding of the nation, Hans Mueller applied for Chinese citizenship and was approved by the CPC to become a Party member in 1957.

In the 1950s, he successively worked at Changchun Third Military Medical University and China Medical University in Shenyang. In 1960, Mueller suffered a severe heart attack. When Hatem, then a consultant to the Ministry of Health, learned of the situation, he went to Shenyang to escort Mueller to Beijing for treatment and invited him to stay at his home.

The Party organization considered Mueller's physical condition and arranged for him and his wife, Kyoko Nakamura, to work at the newly established Beijing Jishuitan Hospital after listening to his ideas. Working at the hospital, he not only coached interns and made ward rounds but also worked in the outpatient clinic three times a week.

In 1972, with the help of Premier Zhou Enlai, he was transferred to Beijing Medical College as its vice-president. Knowing that hepatitis B was endangering the health of the Chinese people, he urged the authorities to pay attention to research on prevention and treatment. In 1972, when he accompanied his wife to Japan to visit her relatives, Mueller met with Professor Kusuya Nishioka, a Japanese expert on hepatitis. Their common interests and beliefs led to a positive relationship. The conversation with Nishioka strengthened Mueller's determination to study hepatitis.

Nishioka was friendly toward the Chinese people. He not only told Mueller the details of his research on hepatitis but also gave him some hepatitis B testing boards at their parting to take back to China for trial. Mueller was so excited that he immediately brought the hepatitis reagents back to China after getting permission from the authorities.

With strong support from the Beijing People's Hospital affiliated with Beijing Medical College, Mueller immediately organized the staff to set up a research group. Under his guidance, the group developed China's first batch of hepatitis B vaccine on July 1, 1975 after many trials and experiments. They named the vaccine "7571" as a birthday gift to the CPC.

The successful development of hepatitis B vaccine made China one of the world's leading countries in hepatitis research. Its first institute of hepatology was established with Hans Mueller as honorary director.

In 1979, the Institute of Hepatology of People's Hospital won first prize for National Scientific and Technological Achievements. As a member of the sixth, seventh and eighth CPPCC national committee, Mueller actively called for the prevention and treatment of hepatitis B, universal vaccination and the prevention and treatment of hepatitis at the annual session. He was thereafter known as the "father of the

hepatitis B vaccine" in China.

In 1989, on the occasion of his 50 years of service in China, the Ministry of Health awarded him the title of "Outstanding International Medical Soldier".

Explain China's views and promote international exchanges and cooperation

Sidney Shapiro, a China expert, translator and author of *Ma Haide: The Saga of American Doctor George Hatem in China*, thought Hatem should be listed among the best public relations people in China. He loved to talk with people and his speech was colorful and colloquial, sincere, reasonable and filled with logic. He felt obliged to introduce China to everyone he could, and he did a good job as a journalist, doctor, diplomat, scholar and tourist. Most of the people he talked to liked him. He had a great influence on the views of people abroad about China.

As early as in the Yan'an period, Hatem was involved in the work of Xinhua News Agency to broadcast messages in English to the world, disseminating the CPC's thoughts on the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and exposing the Japanese imperialists' crimes in invading China.

In October 1940, when the Pub-

licity Department of the CPC Central Committee set up an international publicity committee, he took an active part in the editing of the English publication Report from China to boost external exposure. In 1944, he participated in receiving the Chinese and Foreign Press Corps and the US Military Observer Group on their visit to Yan'an. He introduced the situation in Yan'an and promoted the international community's understanding of China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the political views of Yan'an.

After the War of Liberation, he was active in the field of international medical exchanges and cooperation, and continued to work hard to promote understanding and friendship between the people of China and other countries. He also wrote for the external publication China Reconstructs, introducing China's construction using facts and a plain writing style.

"George Hatem had shown in the Yan'an period that he was not only a highly skilled doctor but also an excellent advocate and people's diplomat," said Huang Hua, a close friend of Hatem and a well-known senior diplomat. Hatem may not have been able to answer all the questions Westerners had about China, but he could at least explain them from the point of view of someone with a Western background, which greatly promoted the under-

standing of Western people on China's issues and opened a window of understanding.

When Mueller moved to Beijing, he often talked with Hatem about China's medical and health situation. They shared the same political views. Both had lived in Yan'an. Both had joined the CPC and become Chinese citizens. And both had a good understanding of China. They often played host to foreign visitors together, explained China's propositions to them, introduced the development of medical and health services in China and actively sought international assistance and support to promote people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

As early as during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Mueller went to the front with an Indian medical team and established international friendships through his work.

In 1944, he had friendly talks with Chinese and foreign journalists who visited Yan'an, telling them about the crimes committed by the Japanese invaders and the moves of the Eighth Route Army in the war. Mueller's efforts enhanced the journalists' understanding of the CPC's position in the war against Japan.

After the War of Liberation, to promote China's medical and health cause — especially research on hepatitis prevention and control — he used various channels to learn about the

progress of hepatitis research around the world, actively participated in international academic conferences, invited foreign experts to visit China for exchanges and talent training and made outstanding contributions to the research and prevention of hepatitis.

In addition to working in medicine and healthcare, he also undertook consulting work in translating important German works and actively promoted cultural exchanges between China and Germany. His friend Rewi Alley said that his life was one of indomitable spirit, a living example of devotion to work and an inspiration to all who came after him.

Working in China for more than half a century, George Hatem and Hans Mueller experienced the Chinese people's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation, and both participated in the construction of socialism in China. For more than 50 years, they worked on the healthcare front. In work, they were practical, innovative and good learners. They were serious and responsible for work undertaken, diligent, and hard-working. They were sincere, warm-hearted, helpful and full of revolutionary optimism.

Politically, they were honest and loyal to the revolutionary cause — examples of good communists, practical-minded internationalists, dedicated doctors and men of integrity. ■

It was Mid-Autumn Festival, Sept 15, 2016. The former residence of Madame Soong Ching Ling in Beijing was bright with joy and laughter. More than 80 guests from home and abroad had gathered for a meeting themed "Soong Ching Ling and Gung Ho: Cultural Exchange Between China and Western Countries".

Maurice Alley, nephew of Rewi Alley, and Rewi's niece Dorothy Waymouth had traveled all the way from New Zealand. Alley and a few other Westerners who sympathized with the Chinese people's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression had launched the Gung Ho Movement during World War II. Brian Hewson, political counselor from the New Zealand embassy in Beijing and David Bromwich, president of the New Zealand China Friendship Society, were among the guests.

During the meeting, I met with Vanessa Dingley, niece of George Hogg, a British friend of the Chinese people; Peter Jarvis, Hogg's grandnephew; and Nie Guangtao, Hogg's adopted Chinese son. They told me many stories about Ally and Hogg.

A foreign journalist in China theatre

Vanessa Dingley, hair gray and short and wearing a deep green patterned dress had the air of a scholar. She had traveled from Canada.

George Hogg and his Shandan story

He Yan

“I arrived yesterday but have learned a lot. Both my father and Peter’s grandfather were George Hogg’s brothers,” she said.

George Hogg was the sixth child of his parents. Vanessa’s father, Stephen, was their fourth child and Peter’s grandfather, Daniel, was the third.

“I never met Uncle George,” Vanessa said. “He was in China and passed away before he returned to Britain. I was 2 years old then. But my aunt Rosemary Baker had been close to Uncle George and often told me about him.

“In China, Uncle George adopted the four brothers of the Nie family. My aunt called Nie Guangtao “Lao San”. Lao San often wrote to my aunt in English. I got to know something from those letters. When I was young, my family had a sculpture of a Chinese-looking man. My aunt said, ‘This is Lao San, give him a hug.’ I hugged the sculpture.”

George Hogg was born in 1915 to a middle-class family in Harpenden, Great Britain. When he was young, he went to a Swiss boarding school and a year later returned to Britain to continue his schooling. Following his three elder brothers, he was enrolled in Wadham College of Oxford University, where he was secretary of the rugby club and captain of the school team.

During summer vacation in 1936, along with a scholar, Hogg hitch-hiked from central to southeastern Europe. He toured Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union and did some study.

The next year, after Hogg had earned bachelor of arts degree, his aunt Muriel Lester, a pacifist Quaker, was planning a tour around the world. His parents thought that regardless what he chose for his career, the trip would be educational and help his entire life. As such, the 22-year old young man said adieu to his hometown and after an ex-

tensive tour around the United States continued his trip, via Japan, to Shanghai in February 1938.

While in China, Hogg witnessed Japanese armies burning down Chinese villages and killing farmers with bayonets. City streets were crowded with hungry, homeless people. They were skinny and perished in the cold. Their only chance of survival was by begging the invaders.

The shocking atrocities horrified him. He decided to stay in China where he could learn more about the country and people and investigate their problems. When the time came for him to go to India and then back to Britain, he pleaded: “No, aunt. I can’t leave these people.”

At first, Hogg worked as a special correspondent for the Manchester Guardian. In March, he left for Hankou as a freelance reporter for United Press. There, he often traveled to and fro along the Yangtze River, recording

what he saw in the cities of Wuchang, Hanyang and Hankou. Some of his writings read as follows:

“It is getting warmer. Malaria, cholera and typhus fever were raging. Chances of getting infected are as high as that of getting hit by a stray bullet, or getting arrested in a dilapidated wooden house.”

Another example: “I was walking by the roadside filled with the ruins of bombed houses. I could smell in the air the decaying wood, dust, plaster

and shattered stones. Temporary tents were erected for shelter. An old woman was murmuring near the ruins of a destroyed old house.”

In May, Hogg left for Yan’an, where he stayed for a week. He was deeply impressed. He recalled that “The tea seller refused my money. They called me friend. I was soon elevated to the rank of comrade.”

Also: “I’m now in the heart of Red China. It is not so seriously red, because the greater goal is to fight

against Japanese imperialists. It is certainly the most powerful center for the fight against Japanese aggression.”

While in Yan’an, Hogg found that “young people, from all sectors of society, from all parts of China, and from Singapore, Manila, New Zealand and Hawaii were drawn here. It is surprising. ...

“What drew them here was the fame the Red Army earned in battles against the Kuomintang forces before the Xi’an Incident. The tactics of guer-



At Mid-Autumn Festival of 2016, Peter Jarvis, Hogg’s grandnephew; Nie Guangtao, George Hogg’s adopted Chinese son; and Vanessa Dingley, niece of George Hogg (from left to right) gathered at former residence of Madame Soong Ching Ling in Beijing.

rilla warfare, now widely accepted as the only way to win the war against Japanese aggression, were created by the Red Army.”

In July, Hogg returned to Hankou, a city under the threat of Japanese invasion. The Japanese air raids were frequent, plunging the locals into an abyss of misery. In October, most of the press moved along with the Kuomintang government to Chongqing. Following the panicking refugees, Hogg went all the way to Xi'an and recorded what he saw along the way. He later took the risk of returning to Hankou, where he was one of 18 foreign journalists who stayed in the war zone.

Hogg continued working in Hankou until the city was lost to the Japanese army. He was sent to Shanghai by a Japanese military aircraft. There, he sent a report to the Manchester Guardian that was published as a front page lead story. Headlined “A View of Empires in Action”, the report criticized Western powers for their inaction ahead of the Japanese invasion of Hankou. They cared only about their own interests rather than being moved to protect the Chinese people, the article said.

Rewi Alley's best assistant

In early summer of 1938, Hogg was introduced to Rewi Alley, a New Zealander, by American journalist Agnes Smedley. Alley was busy prepar-

ing for the establishment of Gung Ho — Chinese industrial cooperatives — nationwide. He said: “If you want a job that is busy but not paid for, you may work for our northwest office in Baoji. A lot of work awaits you there.”

After Wuhan fell to the Japanese, Hogg departed Shanghai for a tour of Japan and Korea. He returned to North China the following spring. He fell ill in a country inn near Ding county and was diagnosed with typhoid fever. The disease almost took his life. Kathleen Hall, a nurse from New Zealand, who was on her way from Japanese-occupied Peiping and carrying medicines to

supply a Canadian doctor, Norman Bethune, happened to pass by. Kathleen wrapped Hogg in a blanket and took him to her small clinic in Beisongjiazhuang, Quyang county, Hebei province. Hogg received careful treatment there.

In May 1938, when fully recovered from the disease, Hogg was invited to a one-week visit to the headquarters of the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei military region in Fuping county, Hebei province, by General Nie Rongzhen. Subsequently, he visited the entire revolutionary base.

At the headquarters of the Eighth



George Hogg visited an Eighth Route Army base in May, 1939. From left to right: Nie Rongzhen, Liu Ke (interpreter), George Hogg and Deng Tuo.

Route Army in Wuxiang county, Shanxi province, he had a thorough discussion with Zhu De, commander-in-chief of the army. In his book *I See A New China*, he wrote: "The Communist Party of China led the country to democracy and in fighting Japanese aggression. It is of historical significance."

Through the visit, he realized that the war was also being fought by ordinary Chinese people. It was fought by people from thatched cottages lying in the valleys and cave dwelling hanging on cliffs, and by refugees from north-eastern industrial cities. The war had its class basis. The rich sought to surrender. The landowners saw their power weakened when tenants grabbed weapons from the enemy to arm themselves.

In early summer that year, Hogg followed his original plan to go south to Baoji, where the northwest office of Gung Ho was located. He assumed the posts of inspector and secretary for international publicity and supervised the department of women's affairs of the office. Before long, he met Rewi Alley again. In a letter to his mother, he said: "Now it is time I worked for China. No matter what, it is going to be a long period."

There were a lot of Buddhist temples in Xi'an. Hogg made good use of them by organizing female refugees to work in them, producing 200 suits per day. In less than a year's time, 21 cooperatives were established in five cities and towns by the women's affairs department of the Gung Ho northwest

office. The department mobilized 5,000 housewives to make military suits and blankets. Two textile schools taught 1,000 women how to improve their spinning wheels and weaving machines and improved the technical skills of the cooperative's members.

Songpan, a wool production region in northern Sichuan province, was home to many Tibetans. To ensure raw materials for Gung Ho to produce 100 military blankets, Hogg and Alley went to Guan county to buy wool. They adapted themselves to local practices. For instance, they traveled on horseback with Tibetans at night along the narrow mountain roads and drank liquor passed from one rider to another. They soon became trusted friends of local people from the Tibetan and Qiang ethnic groups.

Hogg left his footprints in almost every corner of China's hinterlands during his efforts to establish industrial cooperatives. He frequently traveled between Sichuan and Shaanxi, driving trucks or horse carts loaded with supplies for the cooperatives and braving the enemy's air raids. Since its establishment in August 1938, Gung Ho had established more than 2,000 cooperatives nationwide, improving the livelihoods of refugees and supplying front-line soldiers with basic necessities.

Shuangshipu, a small village in Feng county, Shaanxi province, located at a crossroads of the Qinling mountains, was the first experimental site for

Gung Ho. Alley arrived in Feng county in 1939 to give guidance to local Gung Ho activities. It was the birthplace of Bailie Technical School.

Because of the poor conditions, eight headmasters resigned in the first year after the founding of the school. In the spring of 1938, recommended by Alley, Hogg became the ninth headmaster of the Bailie Technical School. In May, 1942, he wrote in a letter: "I'm the headmaster now! How interesting! This is no ordinary school. The students are from poor families. We let them feel at home here in Gung Ho and the school."

A three-room schoolhouse occupied a flat field at the foot of a hill. The only instruments inside were a spinning wheel and a weaving machine. Outside the schoolhouse stood a flagpole on top of which a national flag, faded and ragged at the edges, was fluttering in the breeze. In one of the rooms, more than 10 students who were yet to leave were sleeping on the desks. All of them were exhausted, suffering from scabies and lice.

Working from dawn until dusk, Hogg and his students built walls around the school, planted trees and flowers on the campus, laid a basketball court, added a few rooms to the schoolhouse and dug a cave dwelling. They later had a machine tool and a small gasoline engine. A mechanics workshop was established with more than 60 students.

Bailie Technical School, with “creation and analysis” as its motto, provided its students with a half-work, half-study experience. In 1943, Hogg wrote to his mother: “Our aim is to train technical workers. On the other hand, we work as a social organization to improve people’s livelihoods. ...

“Everything goes on well in the school. We are training a new type of children. We now have some truly essential machines. They are water turbine-driven — small but very efficient. Our products can compete with those made in city factories. We will train some technical talents to run these machines.”

From 1943 to 1944, some of the cooperative factories he helped establish began to make a profit. Hogg happily wrote to his mother: “Though having no technicians, we have succeeded. We’ve made the river clean and the machines are running. We can make things work. We count on no one else but ourselves.

“The school is developing rapidly. One day Rewi Alley brought seven boys from Bailie Technical School in Luoyang. Their school was closed because of a natural disaster. They had no place to sleep because our school was already full. But I did not succumb to the difficulty. I told myself, since we feel already so crowded, it is no big deal that we get more crowded.”

The school had no stable income and prices were rapidly on the rise.

Hogg sometimes had to bicycle for more than 100 kilometers over the Qinling mountains to Baoji to get money. He had to be back the same night. He

even came across some bandits on his way back one day. He luckily escaped and brought the precious money back to the school.



George Hogg.

School moved to Shandan

Hogg adopted four Chinese children in Shuangshipu. It started with Ren Lizhi, Hogg's girlfriend and a member of the women's affairs department of Gung Ho. In the latter half of 1941, Hogg wrote a letter to his mother: "I told you that my girlfriend went missing on the other side of the Japanese controlled line, didn't I? I've just received a letter from her, the first one since last year. She is doing well. I'm happy to hear that."

Ren Lizhi recalled in her old age: "My comrade Nie Changlin was an underground Party member. His identity was discovered by the enemy, and the Party had to transfer him to the front line. His ailing wife and four children were left at home. And I had decided to join the Eighth Route Army on the front line. Who would take care of the children? I knew Hogg was a trustworthy person, so I asked him gingerly: 'Can you help take care of the children?' Looking a little bit grim, Hogg said: 'I've never taken care of children. What would happen to the children if I were not in?' Then he thought for a while and said: 'There is no other choice; I'll take care of them.'"

In May 1941, 12-year-old Nie Guangchun, the eldest of the four children, and Nie Guanghan, the second-eldest at 9 years old, met with Hogg at Gung Ho's headquarters in Baoji. The three of them took a truck to Bailie Technical School in Shuangshipu. Later

their mother passed away. Nie Guangtao, the second-youngest at 6 years old and his younger brother, Nie Guangpei, who was 4, were also taken by Hogg to the school.

In memory of Nie Guangtao, Hogg always wore overalls and straw sandals. He spoke fluent Chinese. Nie was a sickly, weak child, and Hogg fed him eggs and sheep milk. He also bathed him and cut his hair. He often put him on his lap and bounced him up and down. Getting on his hands and knees on the ground and crawling back and forth, Hogg would let the boy ride on his back as if he was a horse.

In his letter to his mother in May 1942, he wrote:

"I've adopted four children. I think I told you before. At first, I was not careful enough. I later caught 74 lice in one of their shirts. There were still some at large. I burned the shirt and bought every one of them two new shirts and two pairs of new trousers. Last time I investigated their pile of clothes, I discovered only three lice. As a father, I feel proud that they have now developed the habit of bathing."

As the war continued, it was likely that the Kuomintang army took the schoolhouses. Alley and Hogg were deemed by the government to be dangerous pro-communists and the two received intense political pressure. Students over 16 years of age were required to join the Kuomintang youth league. Hogg told Alley: "We should

continue training these students. In the future the common people will take over the country's power, most probably in the northwest first.

In the summer of 1943, on his way to Yumen, Gansu province, for field study, British scientist Dr. Joseph Needham happened to pass Shuangshipu. He took Alley to Shandan in Gansu province, an ancient town in the central part of the Hexi corridor. When they were about 1,100 kilometers from Shuangshipu, they passed two mountain passes more than 3,000 meters above sea level. Alley discovered the town to be an ideal place, far from big cities, rich in natural resources and seldom bothered by Kuomintang officials.

By the end of November 1944, the first group of 33 children, along with most of the teachers, left the school with part of the equipment. When the lodgings had been prepared, Alley went to Lanzhou to meet with the group. He rented an old truck there. On Christmas day, they arrived at Shandan.

Nie Guangchun told me the most precious items were the school's machines and equipment. These were dismantled, packed and loaded onto more than 10 horse-carriages. Hogg could not go with the carriages because there were younger children to be looked after. He sent away 10 of the older children. Upon their departure he kept asking them to look after themselves on the way and stay on good terms with the drivers.

In a letter to his family in the later

part of 1944, Hogg elaborated on this “minor Long March”. He said: “Rewi sent us a letter telling us what to do with the apple trees, the goats and the shepherd, a refugee who helped us look after young children from 5 to 7 years old. But where is the money? That’s a big problem. It costs 87,000 yuan to rent a truck from Lanzhou to Shuangshipu and 7,000 yuan for a wheelbarrow, not to mention other expenditures.”

Hogg took the third- and fourth-oldest of the four brothers, Nie Guangtao and Nie Guangpei, with him. At dawn, on Jan 20, 1945, Hogg embarked on the journey with 30 children and three faculty members. Five carriages driven by horses and mules and a truck, with passengers and machinery on board, set off for the mountains before dawn. The younger children were on the truck under the same tarpaulin that covered the machinery. Older children and the teachers rode the carriages alternately or walked.

On April 2, 1945, Hogg wrote in a letter:

“We finally can do without wheelbarrows. We have to count on mule carriages with rubber tires. Each carriage was loaded with 2 tons of cargo and driven by three or five mules.

“We went 57 kilometers through the mountains in five days. Two of the carriages overturned on the way. It was the worst season of the year. We were hiking in high mountains, against chilly winds unprecedented in the past 20

years. The roads were covered with ice and snow.”

When they stopped at the local textile cooperative in Tianshui,, Hogg bought every child a pair of fur puttees to keep warm.

Nie Guangpei, the youngest of the four brothers, fell ill while they were in Lanzhou. Hogg attended to him every day.

“In Lanzhou we bought six old Mercedes diesel trucks. These trucks were so old that their starters were not functioning well. As a result, in every motorcade made up of these senior babes, there was a cocky young Dodge petrol truck patrolling back and forth.”

Hogg spent his 30th birthday in the mountains between Lanzhou and Shandan.

“Donate all my possessions to Bailie Technical School”

On March 10, 1945, Hogg and the children, all of them exhausted, concluded their “minor Long March”. They settled in the Fata Temple, an abandoned temple near Shandan. In the following months, Alley stayed on the move while Hogg remained with the children, repairing the school buildings.

On April 2, in a letter to his family back home, Hogg wrote:

“We are still busy preparing for the workshops. One side of the compound was designed for workshops. There are rooms for carpentry, steam engine, power generator, lathe, plan-

ing machine, grinding machine, benchwork and wool spinning machine. In the main hall in the middle of the compound, there is a Gauss weaving machine and three remaining Buddha statues.

“Classrooms are on other side of the hall. To the back of it, there are dorms.”

The boiler, steam engine and power generator were the most valuable items of the school. The electricity it generated could be used by the whole county. In return, they received a free supply of coal.

When Alley returned to the school in July, it was well established. In a letter to his mother, Hogg said: “It is meaningful to connect my whole life with the children.”

No one was aware at the time that there wasn’t much time left for Hogg. When doing construction work for the school, Hogg had broken one of his toes. The wound became infected and festered. One day, his jaw began to ache. It was diagnosed a mere cold by the doctor at the local medical clinic.

Rewi Alley went to the school in the evening and found George sitting with steamed bread and a bowl of now cold cabbage soup in front of him, holding his jaw miserably.

“Think I’ll turn in,” he said. “This flu is making my head spin.” But he waited until Alley left.

The next morning the boys were supposed to hike to Yanzhi Mountain. It had been decided that Alley

would lead the party. Alley went to see George, who was still in bed, but his voice sounded more cheerful. He said, “Go along, I’ll be better by the time you get back.”

Just after Alley went out, the first spasm shook him, and he sent word to bring Alley back. It was then that Alley decided Hogg had a tetanus infection.

Alley later recalled: “We made phone calls to all the clinics along the Silk Road. We also sent out our truck in search of tetanus serum. We found a Western doctor in Wuwei and made every effort to get help from Lanzhou. It was, once again, a race against time. We found a top-ranking doctor in Lanzhou, but he failed to arrive in time.”

Alley stayed beside Hogg, waiting anxiously for the arrival of any rescuer.

In quieter moments, Hogg asked Alley to read some of the marked passages in Edgar Snow’s *Red Star over China*. He smiled at some of them and said, “That’s when I began to do a lot of thinking.”

Then he said, “Read the Communist Manifesto! It’s in the Handbook of Marxism over there.” So Alley read it to him a couple of times, and he said, “That makes sense,” and dozed off to sleep for a while before being awakened by the next spasm.

On July 22, Fan Wenhai and Fan Kuoqiang were the two boys on duty with Alley when Hogg asked for a pen and paper, and wrote across it, “My all to the Bailie School.”

Then at the end of his long strug-

gle, just as the first boys back from the hills reached the compound, he seemed to be much calmer, more relaxed, until he suddenly choked and died.

In deep sorrow, the students and faculty buried their headmaster near the Ruoshui River, outside the school’s south gate.

The day Hogg passed away was made a memorial day at the school. The children would sing the school song at his grave. They also played basketball or volleyball and went swimming in the river. Those were sports favored and advocated by Hogg.

Alley wrote: “As a great schoolmaster and revolutionary worker, George remained an inspiration for the boys. Once he wrote a song in Chinese that included the line ‘In Shandan we are born again — we will stay in Shandan till we die.’ Indeed, his love for Shandan and the school was immense. He wanted to see it grow into a university for the common man, building strength into the base of the new society he saw emerging in China, for which he worked so hard. I thought there is no better epitaph for him than this: “Through his being and working, many blades of grass will grow in places where none grew before.”

At the Mid-Autumn Festival of 2016, in the former residence of Madam Soong Ching Ling in Beijing, Vanessa Dingley continued:

“In August, 2010, his alma mater, St. George’s School of Harpenden, invited us to Hogg’s Week. It was there

that I hugged the real Lao San. Dorothy was there, too. Peter and his older sister Hilary also met with us. I felt I had relatives from all around the world.

“I was happy to learn the most recent work of Gung Ho, and I think this friendship is very important. The world is not peaceful at present. There are still dangers, wars and sufferings. Friendship among ordinary people is crucial for the harmony of the world.”

Peter Jarvis told me:

“I have never seen my granduncle. I think he is a kind, hard-working man. His kindness in helping those Chinese children touches my heart. He is the pride of the whole family. My mother Hazel Jarvis is the niece of George Hogg. I’ve learned a lot more about the cause of Rewi Alley and George Hogg through this event.

“There are more and more British schools teaching Chinese now. I have two children. They are now 12 and 11 years old. I would like them to study Chinese in the future.”

Nie Guangtao, also known as Lao San, now in his eighties, brought his grandson with him from Shenyang. He said:

“I told my grandson that our family spreads across Asia, Europe, Oceania and North America. This is a unique family forged in wartime. People-to-people friendship is precious. I hope that through our work, George Hogg’s legacy will be carried on from generation to generation.” ■