

RI SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO CHINA
Christopher Bo Bramsen



**Report to RI President Bill Boyd
on Rotary in China.**

Rotary China



5 June, 2007

Dear President Boyd

First of all, I want to let you know that all the Rotarians you met in Beijing and Shanghai were very pleased with your visit to China (27-30 May 2007). From



your speeches during your visit and from our talks with you at a number of occasions we were all very encouraged to continue the Rotary work we are doing in China. We were also pleased that you, accompanied by Lorna and Director Noraseth, were able to get a first hand impression of how the two clubs are doing, of some of the projects we do and of the issues that we are dealing with in order to secure the future extension of Rotary into China.

This report is sent to you and the members of the RI Board as we are getting to the end of the current Rotary year. The report summarizes recent developments of Rotary in China since our last report from January 2007. It covers the issues we are dealing with and includes some pictures from your visit to China.



1. Relations with the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China

Contrary to the expectations of many China experts, the long-awaited national legislation on international NGO's has still not been adopted. A bill has recently been presented to the very top of the Chinese government, but no adoption has taken place yet. Two reasons seem to be behind this reluctance. The bill is not clear enough on how it is to be implemented, and the experience from other countries that have recently opened up to international NGOs has given the Chinese authorities some reasons for concern. On the other hand, strong advice from outside (the European Union and UNDP in particular) to open up to NGOs, national as well as international, has given some new push to the process. We hope to see some movement after the Party Congress in September 2007. We will continue to follow the situation closely so that we can pave the way for registration once the legislation is in place.

We have continued our talks with the Ministry of Civil Affairs about the possibility of establishing a major project to produce artificial limbs for handicapped people in China. On one hand such a project would give Rotary greater visibility in China, which will be important when legislation opens the way for hundreds of organizations who want to take part in the development of China. At the same time, we must make sure that there is a time limit for the project, so we know beforehand what the entire financial commitment will be if we are to implement such a project.

We are also looking into the best way of securing proper project funding. As it is possible to establish in China representative offices for foreign foundations, we are exploring the possibility of setting up a representative office of the Rotary Foundation. A local trust fund and a board of trustees (local Rotarians) could provide us with a good and safe way to accumulate the necessary funding from other Rotary clubs as well as different types of grants from the Rotary Foundation.

We intend to come with some proposals on these issues within the next months.



In our talks with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing, we have continued to discuss how the PRC can join an international organization where Taiwan is already a member. As you know, this is a well-known political problem that has to be solved vis-à-vis all major international organizations before they can formally register in China. However, with the current stand-still in the NGO legislation process, there still seems to be no hurry to settle this question for the time being. The guiding principle for our discussions with the Chinese authorities continues to be that the extension of Rotary into the PRC should not be done at the expense of the continued successful development of Rotary in Taiwan. At some later stage, when we finish the registration process, this issue will have to be settled with the PRC authorities.

Despite the fact that Rotary is not yet formally established in China, it should be emphasized that the Chinese authorities, at national as well as local level, are very positive towards the many successful projects that Rotary clubs from abroad and from Beijing and Shanghai have worked with over the last few decades. A recent conservative estimate from the RI secretariat in Evanston shows that the total funding of Rotary projects in China from 1991 to 2006 amounts to 77 million US\$. To this should be added 40 million US\$ for app. 5000 Rotary scholarships that have been granted since 1976 from the Yoneyama Foundation in Japan. An impressive total of 117 million USD.

2. The Rotary Clubs of Shanghai and Beijing and the Rotary China Team.

The two Rotary clubs in China are doing well. Each of them has a membership of around 50 to 60 Rotarians. They are good fund raisers and they are engaged in a number of ongoing projects within some of the Rotary priority fields of this year, including health and literacy. The Gift of Life programs (heart surgeries) are important projects in Beijing as well as in Shanghai.



The fact that the two clubs have been chartered with their own club numbers has proven useful when grants are awarded to the clubs. Similarly, the clubs in China have been assigned a number (0052) similar to a district number for administrative purposes.

The clubs continue to be non-districted, but the Rotary China Team which functions as a mini District Leadership Team provides the clubs with an umbrella group that looks at all questions that require action at “district level”.

The Rotary China Team, which includes members from Shanghai and Beijing, as well as from Hong Kong, the US and Europe, met in March in Beijing and will meet again in October. Between these meetings, RCT business is done by e-mail. By having both clubs evenly represented in the Rotary China Team we have insured a good cooperation between the two clubs, governed by a strong sense of common purpose.



Each of the two clubs are engaged in various programs, including Interact Rotaract and GSE. In September, the Rotary China Team will be sending its first Ambassadorial Scholar from China to study abroad. Ji Hui (Jill Ji in English, see photo), was selected by the Rotary Club of Shanghai and will spend one year as a post-graduate student at the University of Copenhagen.

The web-site of the Rotary China Team (www.rotarychina.org) is currently being updated with information about Rotary in China. This is of particular importance in relation to the growing number of individual Rotarians - and of Rotary clubs and districts abroad - that approach the

clubs in China and the Rotary China Team with proposals about joint Rotary activities in China. It is important for our Rotarian friends abroad to understand the special circumstances that apply to the two clubs in China and to the relatively small number of Rotarians that are members of the two clubs.

We continue to organize two training sessions per year for the Rotarians in the PRC. The first of these sessions in 2007 took place in Beijing from 10 to 11 March. We call it the Rotary China Assembly, and it included a PETS seminar for the new club leaders.

As our second training session in 2007 we are organizing Rotary China Conference in



Beijing in October. This is a training weekend for all Rotarians in Beijing and Shanghai as well as a forum for a general discussion of Rotary matters, much like a District Conference.

The question of extension in China, including the establishment of new Rotary clubs in China, is frequently brought up, typically by expat Rotarians who are residing in a Chinese city and who want to create venues for meeting as Rotarians. Our answer to these enquiries follow these lines: With the formal chartering of the two clubs in Beijing and Shanghai, the Chinese authorities made it possible to establish these two clubs as forerunners for future clubs in mainland China. However, the mutual understanding with the Chinese is that no more clubs be established for the time being, i.e. until the NGO legislation opens up for a formal registration.



Meanwhile, we are looking into other possibilities. The extension committee of the Rotary China Team is currently working on a report which will explore ways for other Rotarians in China to meet. This includes the possibility of making a Rotary e-club for Rotarians in China who do not live in Beijing and Shanghai. Another possibility could be for Rotarians in Hong Kong and Macao to meet on an informal basis as a Fellowship group in cities such as Shenzhen or Zhuhai in Guangdong Province. Once the recommendations are agreed to by the Rotary China Team, we will submit them to the Rotary International for possible implementation in cooperation with the PRC authorities.



From 1 July 2007, Rotary International has established a China Extension Committee. As RI Special Representative I have been asked to chair this committee, with PRID Gary Huang from Taiwan as Vice chairperson. The other six members of the committee are Rotarians from Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing.

To sum up: The two Rotary Clubs in mainland China are doing well. As flag bearers, frontrunners or bridgeheads, they are *leading the way* in preparation of the day when China formally will become a part of the Rotary world. In the meantime we must all show some patience.

We congratulate you with your many accomplishments during your year as President of Rotary International.

Yours in Rotary

Christopher Bo Bramsen

RI Special Representative to China