

EDITORIAL

Chile rescue recalls mankind's finest moments

This week's rescue of the 33 miners trapped underground in Chile was one of the most affecting and inspirational news stories of recent times. Seemingly lost without hope after the collapse of the San Jose mine, the men were saved after spending more than two months trapped half a mile below the surface in the most challenging conditions imaginable. The world held its breath as the men slowly began to emerge from below and delighted in the miracle as, one by one, they returned to the arms of their loved ones.

The international news media, so often the bearer of bad news with reports on economic woes, conflict, disease and tragedy, relished covering the event. Throughout the operation, newspapers and television bulletins across the globe led on every development. The prospect of the mission's failure was ever present, but the resilience, selflessness and remarkable dignity of those involved brought about the rescue's ultimate success. People in every country could share pride in the achievement.

Only so many events in history have had such an edifying global impact. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of Nelson Mandela's release from prison come to mind, but perhaps the mass media's most iconic moment of all was Apollo 11's moon landing, when footage of Neil Armstrong's first tentative steps across the lunar surface was beamed across the world.

The link between that glorious achievement of 1969 and this week's events does not end there. NASA's expertise, gained from decades of space travel, formed a core element of the Chilean rescue. The organization's medical specialists were on hand to offer the miners advice on how to maintain good physical and mental health in such confined and limited conditions, and its aerospace engineers helped to design the Fenix capsule that so expertly ferried the miners to safety above ground.

The human race has benefitted in countless other ways from the study and exploration of outer space. Thousands of commercial products have been invented as a result of the research, including the cell phone, digital television and satellite radio. Technology developed to keep track of the health of astronauts is now widely used in hospitals to monitor patients, new cancer detection devices have been created, water filtration systems born out of space travel are being used in the developing world and engineering templates designed during the construction of spacecraft have led to huge improvements in aviation safety.

This past week has witnessed a number of new developments in spaceflight: Billionaire Richard Branson has revealed more detail on his plans for a commercial Virgin Galactic service, which will offer paying customers the chance to travel beyond the earth's atmosphere; a team of astronauts from the U.S. and Russia arrived safely on the International Space Station; and the U.S. moved closer to getting an extra space shuttle flight when President Barack Obama signed a new NASA spending bill into law.

In these times of economic crises, the value of space exploration is often brought into question. People want to know why money is being spent on such costly enterprises, which offer no guaranteed results, when there are so many problems on earth. The financial argument does have justification, and that debate will not be explored here, but there is also a common fallacy present in modern life which assumes that we as a people already know all there is to know, and we have already done all we can do. The train of thought leads us to believe that the possibilities of the universe, and of the human race, are the stuff of fiction and fantasy, and therefore not worth exploring.

The prevalent "bad news" reports of war, poverty and corruption too often remind us of man's failures, and as a result there is a stultifying underestimation of our capacity for discovery and progress. But the "good news" story to come out of Chile featured none of that fatalistic resignation. The trapped miners remained calm, focused and disciplined when there seemed little hope that they would ever be rescued. Meanwhile, their colleagues and the emergency services above ground continued to search for them even though all logic told them that their efforts would be in vain.

Just as Neil Armstrong's famous "giant leap for mankind" speech revealed our potential as a species, the Chilean miners' first steps above ground gave us a timely reminder of what can be achieved when there is optimism, ingenuity and an unerring faith in the human spirit.

Funding needed for mentally troubled



DANIEL J. BAUER

The topic of mental illness made an appearance in the news last week, and I'd like to say something about it. It seems wise to emphasize at the start, however, that I am sorry if that term offends anyone. In an age of fine-tuned sensitivity for political correctness, "mental illness" does have a bit of a rough ring about it.

According to local media, Director-General Chin Lin of the Taipei Life of Heart Association called on government leaders last week to be more attentive to the needs of the mentally ill and the mentally challenged in our local society.

Since I know next to nothing about Downs syndrome and medical conditions similar to it, it is best to confine my focus here to what I grew up knowing as "men-

tal illness."

And you can believe that I grew up with mental illness. It was all around me. I know what it is like to have a loved one whose life has turned miserable because of severe depression and acute schizophrenia. As I have mentioned previously in this space, my mother was afflicted with mental illness when I was a child. Mom had to be institutionalized for the rest of her life when I was a high school student. It is not an overstatement to say my mother's illness had an incalculable effect on all of us, my Dad, my brothers, my sister and, of course, me too.

I am convinced that one reason my life took the paths it did is because of feelings I tend to have for people on the margins of society, people who are in pain, who are hurting in one way or the other.

Chin Lin and friends at the Taipei Mental Rehabilitation Association are concerned about projected budget cuts now on the negotiating

table at the Department of Health that could axe a program that dispatches social workers to the homes of the mentally ill and mentally challenged. Since about 90 percent of this special population lives in our communities and not in institutions, this particular outreach program is truly precious. Now is the time to put pressure on policy-planners not cut back on services for our mentally troubled. In fact, perhaps society and individuals should be doing more to assist them.

I am not only worried about the possible loss of a few programs that offer help to individuals and families burdened by mental illness. I am also concerned about attitudes in general about our mentally troubled.

In our neighborhoods and within our families and schools, loved ones carrying heavy mental pain need all the understanding they can get. If our government agencies can find public funds for

events related to holidays and celebrations, for plush receptions for visiting dignitaries from China and elsewhere and for flower exhibitions, those same agencies ought to be able salvage basic human services for our mentally troubled.

The topic of mental health opens us to wider questions that touch local college students and the quality of their lives.

As a department chair some years ago, I met every year with professional counselors and the parents of students suffering from mental illness. Every situation had of course its own special features. No two troubled students were exactly alike. In some cases the parents needed as much attention and counseling as did the students. Sometimes it seemed wisest to advise students to take academic leaves and to attempt the rigors of a university education at an easier time in their lives. In some cases, parents pled with my colleagues and me to bend rules (and

occasionally common sense) to keep their children in class. More than once I felt a mother here or a father there wanted our university (and even me personally) to climb into the skin of a psychiatrist and find a cure for their son or daughter.

Mental illness can be mystifying, frustrating, and scary. Classmates and instructors of mentally troubled students have needs and rights too. There has to be a limit at times to what the rest of us can do to help young friends with broken emotional worlds.

I take my hat off to community leaders in mental health and want to support them in their important work. We've just got to find ways to make this world a little kinder, a little more doable for our friends with special needs.

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Global economic institutions may lack drama, but not clout

By ARTHUR I. CYR

Special to The China Post

Annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank just concluded in Washington, D.C., have reconfirmed the fundamental strength of the world's economic institutions, while underscoring the steadily expanding influence and visibility of developing nations, composed primarily of those known during the Cold War as the Third World.

Far from demonstrating weakness of the major developed nations, this shift confirms the very long-term wisdom of Anglo-American support for relatively open global economic relations, assistance for poor countries seeking to progress into prosperity, and working through the United Nations world system, including the associated economic institutions.

The U.S. and Britain spearheaded the effort to establish the U.N. and the relatively complex associated economic institutions during World War II. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the Atlantic Charter, which contained the vision for the U.N., after a secret summit off the coast of Newfoundland Canada.

The historic Newfoundland conference was held in the summer of 1941, even before the U.S. directly entered the global war following Japan's devastating surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Initial plans for the principal economic arms of the U.N. were laid in 1944 at Bretton Woods New Hampshire, again with American and British leadership, while relentless world war continued.

In very practical terms, the continued effectiveness and success of these organizations has kept the recent severe international recession from being even worse.

Over time, they are reducing unemployment in nations very hard-hit by the collapse of the gigantic speculative bubbles in the financial housing and wider derivatives markets. Extreme protectionism, which devastated the world's economies in the 1920s and 1930s, has been restrained in our time.

The World Bank initially aided nations devastated by World War II, then continued under Presidents Robert

McNamara and A.W. Clausen to foster economic industrialization and infrastructure development in the Third World.

Today, there is intense interplay and also no little strife among member nations of the IMF seeking to reallocate resources and responsibilities to reflect a dramatically evolving global financial environment.

In this context and others, Washington is providing sustained leadership. U.S. officials introduced a procedural initiative to change composition of the twenty-four members of the IMF executive committee. Over time, this effort undoubtedly will reduce the overall influence of European members while increasing the impact of those from the developing regions of the world, especially Asia.

Reflecting this long-term global shift, the center of action in global economic interplay among governments has shifted over the past few years from the Group of Eight to the Group of Twenty. The G-8 involves the economically advanced nations of North America, West Europe and Japan, plus Russia. The wider G-20 net includes Brazil, China and India.

International organizations usually are not the source of media drama, but there are exceptions. In the fall of 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama shrewdly selected Pittsburgh as the site of the G-20 summit. Over the past three decades, that city has transformed from grimly declining steel manufacturing metropolis to a global high-tech center, with relatively low unemployment.

The Economist Intelligence Unit has described Pittsburgh as the most livable city in the United States. Apple, Disney, Google and Intel are among the numerous high-tech firms to participate in the city's rebirth.

Next month, the G-20 convenes in South Korea, a prosperous G-20 leader and especially close ally of the United States. Obama should use that opportunity to underscore the drama of development — and help himself politically.

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Dialogue key to peace in Asia

By SONG QINGRUN
BEIJING, China Daily/Asia News Network

The first ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) is expected to help strengthen security and defense cooperation in East Asia and contribute to regional peace and stability.

The meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Tuesday brought together the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its eight Dialogue Partners — Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the United States. It is a concrete step toward crystallizing the decision by the bloc's defense ministers' meeting in May, to resolve the problem of the long-standing lack of a defense ministerial-level security dialogue mechanism in politically diversified East Asia.

Unlike previous ASEAN regional forums that were dominated by economic and political issues, the first ADMM-Plus is dominated by security issues. Its attendees are mainly defense ministers and military officials without foreign ministers and scholars. The joint declaration signed by participating countries and the pragmatic approach shown by them to promote bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation will surely serve as a milestone toward the construction of a common security mechanism in this region.

As a key player in maintaining regional peace and security, China has consistently made unremitting efforts toward this purpose and also received a high degree of attention at the Hanoi gathering because of a series of events that recently occurred in this region.

Due to the rapid rise of its national strength, which is in sharp contrast with the comparative decline of Western countries, China's normal diplomatic moves to safeguard its national interests have been misinterpreted by some as its "more aggressive than before" attitude in dealing with other countries. A moderate increase in the country's military spending, together with its ever-expanding economic bulk, has

again re-ignited the once-latent "China threat" tone.

As the result of growing misgivings among some neighboring nations toward China and the U.S.' strengthened precautions against it, a string of joint military exercises were organized by Washington and its Asian allies over the past months across the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan to the South China Sea and Southeast Asia.

At the foreign ministers' meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum in July, the U.S. and Vietnam did not conceal their attempt to make the South China Sea issue — a regional issue — into an international one.

All these, together with Japan's recent illegal detention of a Chinese fishing boat in the waters off China's Diaoyu Islands and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' recent antagonistic remarks against China on sovereign disputes involving the South China Sea issue, have put China in an unprecedented, severe security situation.

Facing such an adverse security environment, China still adheres to its long-cherished peaceful foreign policy. It chose to participate in the ADMM-Plus in a pragmatic and cooperative manner. In fact, China had already extended its support to the Hanoi meeting and offered help to the host nation toward the success of the event. China also reaffirmed its clear stance of backing ASEAN taking initiatives to promote regional security cooperation — a stance that received positive response from Vietnam, which takes over the rotating presidency of the regional grouping. This has helped create a good atmosphere for Premier Wen Jiabao's participation in a series of summit meetings due to be held between ASEAN and relevant countries in Vietnam at the end of October.

To promote pragmatic cooperation on regional security, Defense Minister Liang Guanglie also chose to shelve disputes with his U.S., Vietnamese and Japanese counterparts at the ADMM-Plus on the issues of

the South China Sea, East China Sea and Diaoyu Islands. This fully demonstrated the country's desire to seek cooperation with other regional members in promoting regional security and maintaining regional peace and stability.

With its concrete action, China has demonstrated to neighbors that it neither threatens their security nor challenges regional security. China's good-will actions have won positive reactions from the U.S. and helped the two countries reach consensus on a two-day dialogue between their military officials on maritime safety and communications as well as a deputy defense ministerial-level dialogue due to be held in Washington later in the year. Gates is also scheduled to visit China in early 2011 at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Liang Guanglie. The British Broadcasting Corporation commented that Gates' scheduled visit is a sign of Washington's efforts to seek improvement in ties with Beijing.

With the wish to undertake deserved responsibilities for regional security, the Chinese defense minister once again expounded China's defense policies and reaffirmed its long-advocated proposals on promoting regional security cooperation. China proposes to enhance mutual understanding and mutual trust among regional countries to consolidate the political foundation for regional security cooperation. That cooperation should also be strengthened in the non-traditional security scope to cope with new security issues.

China also stands by the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference into other countries' internal affairs to build a reasonable regional security framework.

The country has also made its position clear — that it is in favor of the ASEAN-dominant regional security mechanism in the efforts for regional peace and security. Such a stance will help ease misgivings among some countries that China intends to play a leading role in East Asia's security affairs and even seek hegemony.

Harrier, Tornado in battle royal over UK defense cuts

By TIM HEPHER

PARIS, Reuters

A bureaucratic dogfight between supporters of different combat jets as the UK draws up defense cuts could lead to changes in the way aircraft carriers are designed and how British forces operate, defense sources said.

Options being studied by military planners include delaying the deployment of new carriers to convert them to use conventional traps and catapults instead of the unmechanized decks envisaged for Lockheed Martin F-35 jets to be ordered by Britain.

The move, which sources briefed on the matter said is one of several options as the UK prepares defense cutbacks, would involve other changes to Britain's role in the potential US\$382 billion multinational Joint Strike Fighter project.

Despite U.S. concerns, Britain is already reported to be considering cuts of over 50 percent in its planned order for some 138 Lockheed radar-avoiding F-35B jets for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

The plane, expected in the UK from about 2017, could be built in three models depending on take-off and landing systems.

Britain initially rejected a conventional carrier version designed for the U.S. Navy and chose instead a short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) type designed for the U.S. Marines and fitted with lift fans made by Rolls-Royce.

But the question of how the carriers will be configured — assuming, as many expect, that plans for two new carriers will be kept — has been thrown back into the debate as military chiefs fight over the future of two older planes: the Harrier and Tornado.

This is a battle between the Royal Navy, which flies Harriers, and the RAF, whose backbone is the Tornado fighter-bomber, which is gradually being replaced by the Eurofighter Typhoon.

Most defense sources say the Navy has mounted a successful campaign to save two new carriers worth US\$8 billion, only to face the mounting threat of cuts in Harriers, which will provide its punch on existing platforms until the planned arrival of the F-35B.

While the RAF has pressed for the full early retirement of Harriers, the Royal Navy is pushing for the Tornado to get squeezed out in a defense review due on Tues-

day. "It is a poker game being played out in Downing Street," a person familiar with the discussions said on Friday.

Indications late on Friday were that the Harrier was losing the battle to survive as it stands but there was no final decision or word on timing, two sources briefed on talks said.

The UK defense ministry declined to comment. Currently the Harrier is due to be retired in 2018 and the Tornado in 2025.

'Laughing Stock'

Cutting the Harrier early could leave a short-term gap that raises the specter of headlines about buying carriers with few or no planes — something its backers are quick to point out.

"We would be the only nation with large aircraft carriers with no jets. We would be a strategic laughing stock," Commodore Steve Jermy, former head of the Fleet Air Arm, told Reuters.

Tornado supporters say it has superior targeting and that Harriers lack the full weapons range or reconnaissance required.

Harrier backers say the plane is cheaper and more effective, and they accuse the RAF of cling-

ing to a jet built for the Cold War.

Redesigning carrier decks for conventional operations could throw naval air chiefs a lifeline and allow them to plug gaps — but only at a cost, experts said.

Critics of the plan call it a last-ditch effort to justify carriers that Britain can ill afford.

Carrier catapults use sports-field-length pistons under the deck to shoot planes into the air.

The energy, enough to toss a mid-sized car half a mile, allows jets to take off with more fuel or weapons than a jump jet giving more range and flexibility.

But they need to allow for more spare fuel on board as the pilot lands at flying speed rather than on pure engine hover.

Installing "cats and traps" could open up the possibility of inter-operating with France's Rafale multi-role combat aircraft, a long-held French aim. The Rafale is made by Dassault Aviation.

Other options include leasing Boeing F-18s as a stop-gap or reviving blueprints for a "navalized" Typhoon, but the Navy may be told to tighten its belt and put the carriers on minimum service for now as austerity and Afghanistan prevail. Tornado jets do not operate off aircraft carriers.

Longer term, refitting the decks would mean switching from the STOVL version of the Joint Strike Fighter or F-35B to the conventional carrier version F-35C, likely in reduced numbers.

However, the F-35C may not be available until well into next decade and the dates for the program have slipped overall.

Any delay or reduction in F-35 orders would be a further setback for the program, which has already seen costs rocket.

Abandoning the STOVL version would leave the U.S. Marines as the only customer but their continued strong support for the model would limit the impact, said U.S. defense consultant Loren Thompson.

It would however have an impact on the production run at Lockheed, though industry executives say its pricing projections which tie into that are based solely on U.S. purchases.

UK defense analyst Howard Wheeler said Britain would likely go ahead with barebones carriers and keep the STOVL version.

"I think they will take the F-35B. When they go ahead is something else. I don't think they will order any time soon."

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