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Around the Web: China’s National Day Celebration


Now that the celebration is over and China has celebrated its 60th anniversary, we thought we would point out some of the National Day media coverage that caught our eye:

1. China Digital Times directed us to The Guardian, which posted this wonderful time-lapse video of the parade in Beijing; watch the day’s highlights in under four minutes!

2. Yale University’s Kang Zhengguo wrote this piece for the New York Times op-ed page, in which he reflects on his own National Day experiences over the span of five decades. While Kang marched as a Young Pioneer in the 1959 National Day-10th anniversary parade, during the following decade he would come to view National Day from quite a different perspective:

   It was on the eve of another National Day, in 1968, that the security police suddenly arrested me and put me in a detention center without any explanation. During interrogation, I found out that my “crime” was related to a letter I had written a year before to the Moscow University Library, requesting a copy of “Dr. Zhivago,” which was banned in China as counterrevolutionary. The police had intercepted the letter and had been monitoring me for quite some time.

   I was sentenced to three years of re-education in a labor camp, where I spent two National Days behind bars. On those days, prisoners were granted a reprieve from working in the fields. National Day was a holiday for the guards, who simply locked us inside while they went home. We were able to enjoy a day without supervision. More important, every prisoner would get a few morsels of pork in his meal, which normally featured half-rotten vegetables, thin corn gruel and steamed corn buns.

   So while the whole country was involved in the Oct. 1 celebration, we huddled together inside our cells, chatting and playing cards, a rare break from the daily grind of hard labor. The parade, the fireworks and the slogan shouting seemed as remote as a half-forgotten dream.

3. Long-term views of life in the PRC are also the topic of four videos and an article by the Telegraph’s Malcolm Moore, available here (transcripts of the videos can be found at this link). Speaking with elderly Shanghai residents in the city’s parks, Moore explores the question of “Why the Communist party still enjoys the support of its people.” As 86-year-old Kuai Guoying explains, Chinese society has changed quite a bit in the past several decades, and she credits the CCP for this transformation:

   I often say to my husband that life is totally different for our grandchildren, not only from the life we had, but even from the lives their parents lived. They have nothing to worry about, no need to worry about food or clothes. In the past, one had to work really hard to support four people. Now it is just the opposite.

   Life has been much better now, much better, thanks to the Party, really.

4. A different perspective was on view in Hong Kong during October 1, where hundreds of people gathered to protest the CCP’s rule, and another demonstration attracted Falun Gong supporters. Read the Associated Press story here. As the article’s author, Min Lee, noted, Hong Kong’s status as a Special Administrative Region enabled protests to be held, despite the fact that such assemblies were strictly prohibited on the mainland: “The former British colony was allowed to deviate from the nationwide celebrations because it enjoys Western-style civil liberties as part of its special semiautonomous status.” Notwithstanding this relative freedom, “Some [protesters] later scuffled with police who prevented them from approaching the Chinese government’s liaison office in Hong Kong with a coffin symbolizing victims of persecution.”

5. Finally, NPR’s All Things Considered program ran an interview with Jeff Wasserstrom, in which he discusses the fifty slogans issued by the Chinese government during the run-up to National Day. He also suggests some alternative slogans that the government might want to consider (“If Mao could see us now!”), and we’d like to open that challenge to all our readers.
Send us your ideas for catchy National Day slogans — in either Chinese or English, or both — and we'll feature some in a future post. We can be reached at thechinabeat<at>gmail.com

Tags: National Day