

supportive of environmental issues.<sup>87</sup> Nor does it appear that the entrepreneurial class, at any level, including those associated with TVEs or state enterprises, is eager to become environmental activists and assume a leadership role. Certainly, the growing entrepreneurial class of *getihu* (privatized) business people are focused on making money, not broader social causes, such as income redistribution, equity and environmental protection. Foreign firms and managers often have a tough time convincing Chinese joint venture partners that environmental protection measures should be taken.<sup>88</sup> This part of the entrepreneurial class is also absorbing cadre and intellectuals who might otherwise take leadership roles.<sup>89</sup> Many of the most dynamic members of society have focussed their considerable energy and talent where the Chinese system has encouraged greater independence - in growth and wealth creation.

An illustrative case of how the Chinese regime has recently responded to public or nonofficial views on environmental issues is the Three Gorge dam construction project.<sup>90</sup> The Three Gorge project, which will take until 2009 to complete, will result in a reservoir stretching 385 miles up the Yangtze River. The government's view is that the megadam will provide electricity, improve river navigation, contribute to economic growth and control potential floods. The government has also noted that by providing hydroelectric power, there is less need for alternative sources, i.e., coal, and that this provides an environmental benefit of less air pollution and global warming than would otherwise be the case.

Critics of the project contend that it will disrupt the lives of nearly 1.4 million people, submerge archeological and historic treasures, create the risk of a giant flood, destroy ecosystems and cultivated farm land, endanger biodiversity and alter the

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<sup>87</sup>In April 1994, the Chinese government permitted the first real, independent environmental organization, "Friends of Nature", to register formally in Beijing as a body affiliated to the Academy of Chinese Culture. Stephen M. Young, "Post-Tiananmen Chinese Politics and the Prospects for Democratization," Asian Survey, Vol. XXXV, No. 7, July 1995, pp.664-5.

<sup>88</sup>China Trade Report, December 1995, Volume 33, p.3.

<sup>89</sup>Young, "Post-Tiananmen Chinese Politics," p.656.

<sup>90</sup>In April 1992, the National People's Congress (NPC) approved the Three Gorges project. It is noteworthy, however, that about one third of the NPC voted against authorizing the project or abstained. Votes in the NPC are normally unanimous. Source: World Resources Institute, World Resources 1994-95, p.68.