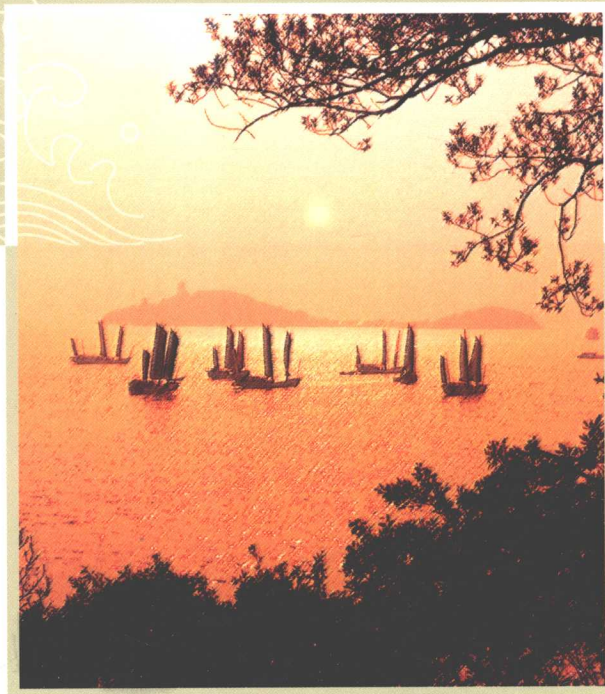


TAIHU LAKE: A CALL TO ACTION

■ By Yang Weize

Translators: Wen Jingen et. al.



"Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us."

The water supply crisis in the early summer of 2007 did not just shock us but invaluablely enlightened us as well. More importantly, it jolted all of us in a **call to action** to improve Taihu Lake's environment, to protect water resources, and to rebuild the ecological system. It has spurred us to embark on a journey towards innovative scientific development.

TAIHU LAKE: A CALL TO ACTION

By Yang Weize

Translators: Wen Jingen et.al.

Phoenix Publishing & Media Group
Phoenix Publishing House



图书在版编目(CIP)数据

警钟与行动:英文 / 杨卫泽著. —南京:凤凰出版社,
2009. 11

ISBN 978-7-80729-325-5

I. 警… II. 杨… III. 太湖—生态环境—环境保护—研
究—英文 IV. X321. 253. 3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 193923 号

Book title: *A Call to Action*

Author: Yang Weize

Planner: Wuxi Phoenix Cultural Development Co. Ltd.

Managing editor: Yu Haiyan

Publishers: Phoenix Publishing & Media Group, Phoenix Publishing House
(formerly known as Jiangsu Ancient Classics Press)

(Address: 165, Zhongyang Road, Nanjing, 210009)

Distribution office Tel: 025—83223462

Website address: <http://www.ppm.cn>

Printer: Bonds Printing House Ltd. of Wuxi Municipality

(Address: 75, Section B, Yangming High—Tech Industrial Zone, Wuxi, 214024)

Format: 787×1092mm 1/16

Impression: 27. 5

Total number of words: 274,000

Date of first publication: November 2009

Date of first printing: November 2009

Book No. : ISBN 978-7-80729-325-5

Price: ¥100. 00

(Should major printing or binding errors occur, please call 0510-85435666 for a replacement)

Prologue

The early summer of 2007 was a harsh, breathtaking moment for the citizens of Wuxi, for CCP Committees and for the government. With pollution at Lake Taihu building up over a long time, triggered by hydrological and weather conditions, there occurred an eruption of blue algae in 2007, one month earlier than in previous years. On May 29, a mass of sewage invaded the Gonghu inlet, the southern water source for the city, leading to sudden change in water quality, touching off a water supply crisis unprecedented in Wuxi's history. The crisis made Wuxi a focus for people in the region, for all China and even the whole world. People watched Wuxi with bated breath. The leadership of the CCP Central Committee and central government, and leaders of the CCP Committee and the Jiangsu provincial government all made repeated inspection visits to Wuxi, working hard to find ways to alleviate the crisis, to plan better management of Taihu Lake and to restore its ecological sustainability.

This episode was very traumatic for the people of Wuxi, sounding alarm bells for us and making us think deeply.

Water is the very source of life, and the basis for the survival and



development of a city. Known as a “Land of Fish and Rice” and as the “Pearl of Taihu Lake,” Wuxi is a city that was born out of and developed and prospered with the lake water's blessing. Admiration for Wuxi is etched into people's memory. People's memories of Wuxi and their love for the city begin with the waters of Taihu Lake. However, the moment people living by the lake had no water to drink, they came to understand that they, the lake's beneficiaries, had become the hapless victims of a polluted body of water. What then arose in their minds was great awe at the might of water and nature.

When a city is in pain, a whole region suffers. As people analyzed the comprehensive and objective causes of the blue algae eruption and water





Zhongdu Hill in Wuxi

supply crisis, they discovered that the root of it was not in the water but on land - in the intense economic activities over a long period, resulting in widespread pollution and extreme exploitation of the waters of Taihu. As is known, the Taihu Basin is one of China's most affluent regions, with the most thriving economy and highest population density. Since the implementation of the policies of reform and opening-up in the 1980s, the cities of Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou, Jiaxing and Huzhou around Taihu Lake have been in the forefront of national economic and social development. These five cities, with 0.3% of the nation's land resources and 1.5% of the country's population, yield 6% of the national GDP. But while the economy has advanced in leaps and bounds, and the population thrived, a heavy price was paid in terms of

the environment and resources. Taihu Lake, which the surrounding residents rely upon for their daily living, had become severely contaminated. The quality of water in the lake had deteriorated by two rankings over the last 20 years.

“Water can carry a boat, and can also overturn it” is a political adage, enlightening and dialectical (where “water” is both a metaphor for the people, and the “boat” symbolizes the government). It is also true for the relationship between human society and nature, and between humans and the ecological environment. This old axiom sheds new light, for we shall pay a heavy price with nature avenging itself on us if we do not abide by its laws, if we do not protect our environment or guide its scientific development.

The crisis issued a warning to people and also called on people to take action. The crisis in 2007 has thus been turned into an opportunity. The Wuxi government has overcome its earlier inaction, and taken the initiative in handling the crisis. Following the instructions of the CCP Central Committee and State Council on the national project to clean up Taihu Lake, the administration of Wuxi City has placed the task at the top of its agenda. Taking the improvement of the environment of Taihu Lake as a step in implementing the scientific view of development, the CCP Committee and the Jiangsu provincial government are also determined to excel in improving the environment of Taihu, protecting water sources, and restoring ecological conditions. They will carry out this campaign with unrelenting vigor. A series of policies have been devised to combat pollution, and root out the problem for good. The most dynamic measures are being set out. The highest standards are being aimed at. The strictest tests are to be conducted, and the campaign aims at the best results. Industrial pollution, domestic pollution and

agricultural pollution will be comprehensively controlled, to restore the ecological environment of Taihu. The goal of the Wuxi government is to curb eutrophication in Taihu Lake and significantly improve water quality in five years, and then in eight to ten years enable the water of Wuxi's Taihu to continuously meet the standards for surface water category III (suitable for swimming), and to restore the beautiful Wuxi scenery, turning the city into a first-rate ecological city in China.

Over the last year, under the leadership of the CCP Central Committee and State Council, as well as the CCP Committee and Jiangsu provincial government, who all showed great concern for Wuxi, and with support and cooperation of all sectors of the society and all districts, the administrators and citizenry of Wuxi have made painstaking efforts, such that pollution control at Taihu has shown encouraging initial results. The quality of the water environment has reached a turning point for better. The latest tests show that, from June 2007 the quality of more than 96% of the water at the sources of water supply have constantly measured up to the city's standards, higher than the specifications in national standards. No complaints about the quality of tap water have been received from its citizens.

The task is long and arduous, but we have taken the first important steps. The campaign to improve the environment of Taihu Lake has been launched, yet it is just a beginning in restoring the ecological conditions of the lake, and in building Wuxi into an ecological city.

The crisis is over and yet danger lurks. We must be constantly on guard against ecological disasters, and pursue even more vigorous actions. The aim of writing the book *Taihu Lake: a Call to Action* is to draw lesson from the nightmares of history that spur us to resolute action.

“Let the 'Pearl South of the Yangtze River' reclaim its former beauty,” said CCP Central Committee General Secretary Hu Jintao, bestowing his hopes on the management of Taihu Lake, and inspiring us to greater heights. We are sure that, under the leadership of the Central Committee headed by General Secretary Hu Jintao and the guiding spirit of the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, with the joint efforts of the people in the Taihu Basin in line with the scientific view of development, Taihu will regain its green waves, and Wuxi will become a new city with a fine ecological environment.

The ecological civilization of Wuxi starts with the scientific management of Taihu Lake. Wuxi's people shall surely delight in a peaceful lake.

Preface

Half of humanity now lives in cities.

In relation to human settlements and urbanization, our world is going through a very significant turning point in history. Beginning in 2008, for the first time, half of humanity is now living in towns and cities. We have seen in reality the beginning of a new urban era. It is projected that globally urbanization levels will rise dramatically in the next 40 years to reach 70 percent by 2050. We thus live at a time of unprecedented, rapid, irreversible urbanization.

Urban growth is most rapid in the developing world, where cities gain an average of 5 million residents every month. As cities grow in size and population, harmony among the spatial, social and environmental aspects of a city and between their inhabitants becomes of paramount importance. This harmony hinges on two key pillars: equity and sustainability.

In the context of this global reality, the book “Taihu Lake: A Call To Action” by Yang Weize, Member of Jiangsu Provincial Party Standing

Committee and Secretary of Wuxi Municipal Party Committee, is not only timely but also a valuable addition to the serious fact-based written materials available world-wide.

The cities growing fastest are those of the developing world. By the middle of the 21st century, the total urban populations of the developing world will more than double, increasing from 2.3 billion in 2005 to 5.3 billion in 2050. In the last two decades alone, the urban population of the developing world has grown by an average of 3 million people per week. Asia is urbanizing rapidly, with approximately 41 per cent of its inhabitants now living in cities. By 2050, Asia will host 63 per cent of the global urban population, or 3.3 billion people. In Asia, the urban transition will occur mainly owing to rapid urban growth rate in China, a country that is expected to be 70 per cent urban by 2050.

The World Habitat Day, observed every year on the first Monday in October, in 2008 chose the theme Harmonious Cities focusing on the state of the world's growing cities and our planet's rapid and irreversible urbanization. The Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations call for a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. At the same time, it is essential that the growth and expansion of urban areas do not come at the expense of the natural environment.

The theme of this year's observance of World Habitat Day, Planning our Urban Future, is meant to underscore the urgency of meeting the needs of city dwellers in a rapidly urbanizing world. Planning is at the heart of this agenda. But planning will work only where there is good urban governance. New ideas from smart cities around the world are pointing the way toward sustainable urbanization.



Both these themes of the last two World Habitat Days proclaimed by the United Nations are very effectively addressed in Secretary Yang's book as seen through personal experience and leadership. He has shown how opportunities could be created and lessons learned to address these challenges at local level that could contribute to the realization of national policy efforts. Here I must say that the campaign to build a resource-saving and environment-friendly society launched by the Chinese government is making great strides in terms of environmental protection and harmonious urbanization.

Secretary Yang provides a vivid case study of the management challenge of the water supply crisis in Taihu Lake in the summer of 2007. After diagnosing in some detail the elements leading to a rapid and unprecedented deterioration in water quality, he outlines with great care the steps that were taken to alleviate the problem. In general, his treatment of "water" in the book in a developmental context is fascinating and meaningful.

Other examples are likewise cited whose solutions could be most helpful to managers everywhere, particularly in the developing countries. But there is another critical element, which reveals depth and incite of Secretary Yang's thesis. It is the response of people, and the difference between calm and alarm. Much of this, however, will be determined by pre crisis preparation and the development of a culture of preparedness. In many parts of the world, this makes the difference between crisis and catastrophe. As we find in the Chinese language, the characters for the word crisis carry within it two ideas: challenge and opportunity. It is through their interface that crisis can avoid becoming catastrophe. And this as well poses its own set of specific

management challenges.

That is why this very thoughtful and timely publication “Taihu Lake: A Call To Action” could provide powerful guidelines for those responsible for managing crisis situations.

This reflects the cultivation of public behaviour as a routine social policy before the crisis strikes. There is also the education component for policy makers. This would include vulnerability management training whereby leaders possess the necessary skills, to manage a crisis without themselves panicking. If the leaders panic or show a lack of confidence so will the public.

As globalization expands, more cities will find themselves managing problems and opportunities that used to be the exclusive domain of national governments. And as more cities come to have populations and economies larger than those of many countries, cities will increasingly become the main players in the global economy. If cities are hubs of dynamism, change and opportunity, they are also places of exploitation, disease and unemployment. Crime, drug abuse and pollution have increased in growing numbers of cities. New tensions are emerging between migrants and established residents, adding to already sharp divisions along class, racial and ethnic lines.

In addition, all too soon, the harsh reality of climate change is upon us and the facts are becoming common place. Hundreds of millions of urban dwellers are also increasingly vulnerable to rising sea levels, coastal flooding and other climate-related hazards. There are 3,351 cities in the low elevation coastal zones around the world. Of these cities, 64 per cent are in developing regions; Asia alone accounts for more than half of the most vulnerable cities. This phenomenon I have witnessed personally as I championed the cause of

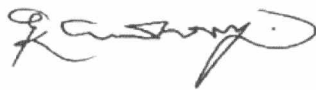
the most vulnerable countries on behalf of the United Nations.

It goes without saying that local democracy coupled with good governance at the local levels is a key factor for the brighter future of all cities. When States treat local authorities as partners, and allow urban residents a voice in the way their streets, stores and workplaces are managed, cities are usually more efficient and livable. Such cities in turn enhance democracy nationally, and make local and national economies stronger.

In this one fully agrees with Secretary Yang that behaviour of both leaders and the public matters, and prudent leaders, especially in crisis prone areas, will take public human behaviour at all levels into account. In this Secretary Yang's book clearly points the way and would make a very valuable contribution both to the crisis management and public policy in general.

As sustainable urban development is one of the most pressing challenges facing human community in the 21st century, Secretary Yang's book deserves wide reading and understanding, particularly by city managers and urban planners as well as environmentalists and grassroots level civil society organizations in the developing world.

I congratulate Yang Weize for his wonderfully engaging book on a subject very relevant to today's world and its people. I feel especially privileged to present this preface of the book.



*Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury
Former Under-Secretary-General and
High Representative of the United Nations
Chairman of Global Forum on Human Settlements*

Introduction

I

Being Responsible to People, Keeping People Informed

What Government Can Learn from Resolving
the Taihu Water Crisis

Public crisis management falls outside the purview of government's routine administration of public affairs. Indeed, since crisis is by definition not routine, its management poses special difficulties for administrators, and remains an interminable headache in the management of public affairs. Yet despite the diverse causes for public crises and their various manifestations, all such crises share common features: they are usually unforeseeable and of immediately undeterminable causes, exert a widespread impact on society

and cause public concern. However, experience gathered in the management of one public crisis may be applied to the management of another crisis. Thus by evoking the water supply crisis of Taihu Lake in the early summer of 2007, this article aims to provide answers to the following questions: What is the nature of unavoidable public crises? What values and basic principles are applicable in handling such crises? What are the key factors in the actions and measures taken against crises?

In the early summer of 2007, there was an outbreak of blue algae in Taihu Lake occurring one month earlier than in previous years. On May 29, water quality at the Gonghu source near Wuxi north of Taihu Lake became unusual, and tap water in some districts of the city took on an offensive smell, severely affecting the lives of millions of citizens. On the same day, the Wuxi municipal government initiated an emergency response plan, and called a press conference. By 1 June 2007, after 72 hours of intense work, the quality of the tap water returned to normal. To prevent a reoccurrence, the administration of Wuxi then adopted stricter technical criteria for water quality control, strengthened the enforcement of environmental protection laws, and adopted a series of measures to address both the symptoms and root causes of the crisis. After June 1, when the quality of water was deemed normal, it never deteriorated again. This was a sign that the situation had been brought under control. This incident shows that, though public crises are not entirely avoidable, they are manageable; and the role of government in crisis management, its attitude and the measures it implements, are crucial to the alleviation of crises.

The nature of the unavoidability of crises lies in the variability of systems. While crises cannot be ruled out, anymore more than engineers are

able to prevent all airplane crashes, such crises affect a wider public, so the handling of them is far more complex than the management of singular and local crises. Measures taken by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Committees and by local governments are therefore not only crucial to the solution of problems, but also exert a profound influence on the public mindset as well.

The management of public crises is conducted at two levels. At the first level, the probability of such crises has to be reduced as much as possible, and such efforts are usually considered measures to “root out” crises. Once a crisis begins, timely measures must be adopted to reduce the losses caused, and minimize its negative effects. In such efforts, a correct analysis of the crisis, scientific methods to handle it and systematic management are all indispensable. At the first level of the management of ecological crises, one has to reorient the economic development mode and effectively forestall ecological catastrophe by saving energy and reducing the emission of waste gases, in addition to repairing the ecological environment. These are the most important aspects of the efforts to root out crises, and imply long-range tasks. The state and provincial governments have attached unprecedented importance to preventing and remedying water pollution in Taihu Lake, and remain determined to making breakthroughs in recovering the natural water environment patterns of the lake.

In its narrow sense, crisis management refers to the second level of public-crisis management, namely, measures to cope with crises immediately before and after they arise. Chinese and international researchers have summed up common characteristics and regularities in the management of unforeseen public crises. Some of their viewpoints have been confirmed in the handling of the crisis at Taihu Lake. In terms of crisis development, US