skeptical cross-examine with hard questions or mumble about prevarication. Still, do we truly prefer the drearily factual to the marvelous? "You see a woman may hold a fan for a moment in front of her face, and have a young man almost paralyzed with the mystery of what expression she is wearing behind it. She may awe them with the turn of an ankle, or the poise of her head." Ah, romance! But, as Jorkens sadly adds, "she can't do that to a man that has known a mermaid."

Perhaps not. But the world, to its loss, no longer believes in mermaids. "I was miles from guessing all that idly bought ticket [to see Gladys] would mean to me. It is like that with the past; it is all gone now; gone forever with all its vastness, all its tremendous import; but it is made out of little trifles like that one-rupee ticket bought in an hour to spare, ashore at Aden. All gone now. . . . Oh, the green of those seas, and oh those sunsets and the blaze of the afterglow. I'm sure they don't shine like that now. I never hear anyone talking of it, of the thousands that pass by Aden. I know they are all gone, all those colors and lights. And nothing remains but this dark, dripping evening."

Many of these wonder tales conclude on just this note, with the aging storyteller sitting quietly alone before his whiskey, staring silently into the fire, unable to shake off the wonder of the past and full of regret for what is so unaccountably gone. And so Dunsany's readers, who themselves remember the ache and allure of other days, slowly come to identify with Jorkens and to feel, if only for a moment, that same sorrow for how much Time takes away. *Sunt lacrimae rerum*.

But then we turn the page and are off yet again: "I said to Jorkens, as I had once said before, 'What is the strangest thing you have ever seen?' And, as it happened, Jorkens remembered that I had previously asked the same question. 'I've told you,' said Jorkens. 'Yes, yes,' I said, 'the daughter of Rameses. I suppose that was the strangest thing that anyone could have seen.'" 'Oh, I wouldn't say that,' answered Jorkens." ♦

Asian Blues

Why the problem of China will not go away.

BY ELLEN BORK

After September 11, President Bush overturned decades of policy toward the Middle East, regretting long-support for dictators and acknowledging the link between democratic governance, stable and humane rule of citizens, and international security. China policy, however, has been left untouched. In fact, the president, who came to office seeking to restore a balance in the relationship with Beijing, reportedly told his staff he did not want a China "inbox."

All this leaves unanswered an important question: What about the dictatorial and undemocratic government in China? The failure to make China's governance an issue in American policy is not new. For decades, the driving idea has been that economic engagement now will lead to inevitable political change later. When America was swept up in the dot-com boom, the power of the Internet was grafted onto this economics-drives-politics argument: Technology is the handmaiden of wealth, zapping information outside the regime's control to wired citizens. Bill Clinton ridiculed the idea of a regime controlling the Internet, painting a comical picture of hapless Chinese cadres trying to "nail Jell-O to the wall" as they attempted to stop the flow of free information.

But, in fact, economic growth has not brought democracy or improved human rights. Just this year, the State Department cited China's "backsliding" and "deterioration." Nor has the Internet put the dictatorship in a stranglehold. Special security forces help the regime shut down Internet cafés, block sites, trace traffic, and imprison Internet essayists. The Falun Gong's clever use of communications—beepers, mobile phones, email—has not enabled it to avoid a brutal campaign of repression. Hundreds have reportedly died in custody and thousands more are incarcerated in prisons, labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals.

Losing the New China
A Story of American Commerce, Desire and Betrayal
by Ethan Gutmann
Encounter, 253 pp., $25.95

China's Democratic Future
How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead
by Bruce Gilley
Columbia Univ. Press, 297 pp., $29.50

Wild Grass
Three Stories of Change in Modern China
by Ian Johnson
Pantheon, 324 pp., $24

Still, the notion that trade will bring about democracy remains irresistible. And it is not surprising that American businesses and their trade associations and lobbyists have taken on a leading role in shaping policy on China. That distorted role of America's business engagement with China is the heart of Ethan Gutmann's new book, *Losing the New China*, an account of his three years in the Far East.

Meanwhile on Capitol Hill, high-tech businesses were claiming that trade and investment would unleash rights and liberties. Gutmann reports how companies jockeyed for contracts to help Beijing police its citizens. Cisco Systems, for example, significantly discounted for the Chinese government the technology to censor the Internet. At a trade show aimed at selling products to China's security apparatus, Gutmann finds products for sale that violate the United States' ban on exporting to

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China "any crime control or detection instruments or equipment." As for any moral qualms, one systems engineer in Beijing said, as Guttmann reported in THE WEEKLY STANDARD two years ago, that how China used Cisco's products was "none of Cisco's business."

It's a short jump from turning a blind eye to believing your own press. When Gutmann proposes an idealistic plan to create a model factory, with health care and safety standards to an American in the garment business, so as to "add value" to the business's reputation, a businessman replies, "We are not a manufacturer in China; we are a retailer." Gutmann gets it right away: "What company wants to say openly that they are in China for the export platform—a very successful export platform consisting of well-controlled, incredibly hardworking labor that costs next to nothing?"

Gutmann's tour of Beijing includes another kind of depravity as well—the sexcapades of some expatriates, like "Rex," the business consultant, who, if he weren't living and working in Beijing, would be known as a sex tourist, and "Jack" who pimps for visiting clients. In Gutmann's telling, the lifestyles of some expatriate businessmen seem to provide their justification for maintaining the myth of profitability in the Chinese market.

But that's not all. American businessmen are often pressured to lobby not just for China's admission to the World Trade Organization, where it arguably has a legitimate interest, but also against American support for Taiwan and against export controls on dual-use items that enhance China's military capabilities.

Few targets of such Chinese pressure feel inclined to go public about them, fearing retaliation from China or their companies. But they are sensitive to the charge. At a 1997 dinner I attended, a shocked hush fell over a room of hundreds of businessmen when a congressional staffer stood up and suggested American businessmen advocating China's positions on Capitol Hill should file under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Landov

Chinese police confiscating computers at an illegal Internet café this year.

Beijing also uses the American business community to reinforce nationalism as a grievance against the United States. After the 1999 NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, a delegation of American businessmen visiting Washington for the annual "door knock" on Capitol Hill found themselves part of Beijing's political theater. A camera shot of them bowing their heads in prayer at a breakfast meeting at the Chinese embassy in Washington was portrayed on Chinese television as an act of humble contrition. Meanwhile, visiting congressmen and their staff were encouraged to feel that expressing sympathy with China's view "would enhance their viability by playing to their host's sensitivities."

Somehow, running alongside the belief that economic growth leads inevitably to democracy, there has emerged a view that nationalism is an immutable part of the Chinese character. These and other assumptions come in for examination in Bruce Gilley's *China's Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead*. Gilley argues that "mainstream, as opposed to official nationalism may be one of the most potent democratic forces." In fact, Gilley argues that Chinese sensitivity to injuries to their national dignity is often bound up with their rejection of the Communist party—as, for instance, in the regime's effort to control the NATO bombing protests.

This is just one of the departures Gilley, a China journalist turned academic, takes from the conventional approach by "policy specialists who imagine the PRC as a representative government whose policies reflect an essentialized 'Chinese world view.'" Gilley rejects an American foreign policy dominated by "experts soaked in Sinology who argue for a soft face-giving approach [and] often forget that they represent democracies that demand accountability." Instead, he urges that Washington remedy the failure of past administrations to pursue an end to Communist party rule, by making concerted efforts to help reformers, and denying the unreformed leadership political capital, including high level summits.

Gilley provides a devastating critique of the failures of the Communist party. His indictment, however, is inconsistent in ways that undermine his ambitious argument about how China will democratize. Gilley is quite clear on the point that the party will not succeed with halfway steps at reform such as allowing participation by non-party individuals. "The problem is the same as those of trying to make the party representative: The goals and power of the party are non-negotiable, and thus outside help can do no more than make the party slightly less dysfunctional and appear slightly more democratic." The legal system too is "a tool of party dictatorship more than a restraint on it." (Oddly, Gilley shows little skepticism about village elections, another of the party's efforts to dress up its control with the trappings of democracy.)

This assessment is difficult to square with Gilley's overarching thesis for the

end of the Communist dictatorship. His scenario goes something like this: The failure of the party to reform itself, reinforced by a hardened attitude on reform since Tiananmen, will, in combination with a future crisis of some kind, unleash popular unrest and mobilization. The regime will be unsuccessful in attempts to save itself. At the crucial moment, neither hardliners nor security forces will order a crackdown. In the end, certain "heroes of retreat" (a term borrowed from a German political scientist) will "extricate" the party from power, clearing the way for a democratic state.

Much in this scenario remains unclear and even contradictory. According to Gilley, the regime will be in steep decline but remain "powerful enough to force the revolutionary change to take place on the inside rather than the outside." Gilley supports his claim that there will be no violent suppression of public unrest with "little noticed pro-reform faction inside the coercive apparatus," internal party teachings against violence, and a revulsion to the ongoing Falun Gong crackdown. Yet at Tiananmen, the leadership was able to bring in forces untainted by such views, or even knowledge of what was taking place, to do the job. And known reformers acquiesced.

Gilley knows a lot about the conservatives, moderates, and democrats he says will determine the outcome of a future regime crisis. He wrote a biography of Jiang Zemin and was coauthor with Andrew Nathan of *The Secret Files*, an account of internal party documents, describing top leaders, leaked in 2001. But he does not provide much meat on the bones of his current claims. Gilley is firm on the need for international pressure, if a little too confident that the international community will actually step up to the plate. Why would other reformers be more likely now to move decisively in a crisis than they were in 1989? Gilley does not give equal time to the regime's efforts to erect a system of control that provides better governance in matters like the environment and health, while remaining uncompromising on politics.

Economic growth doesn't play a significant role in Gilley's scenario—except as a negative factor driving the people to despair. What does become clear in these books is that China possesses the foundations for democracy now. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that continued economic engagement without external pressure is delaying reform and strengthening the repressive apparatus of the state.

If Gilley is consumed with the idea of elite-led change, Ian Johnson concerns himself with the lives and struggles of ordinary people in *Wild Grass: Three Stories of Change in Modern China*. Johnson, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter who won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Falun Gong, describes an unstable situation brought about by a regime that leads ordinary citizens to climb out on limbs the party has allowed to sprout—and then saws off with tragic consequences.

Johnson's heroes are remarkable. Each responded to an injustice or act of inhumanity by arbitrary or corrupt governance. Ma Wenlin, a former teacher, felt obligated to help peasants shake off their crushing tax burdens. Fang Ke, an architecture student, dreamed of monumental projects until overcome by his mentor's mission to preserve Beijing's courtyard homes and alleys. Zhang Xueling, the daughter of a Falun Gong follower beaten to death in police custody, sought official acknowledgment in the form of a death certificate for her mother. They try to find their way, literally, within the system. (She needed help just to find the government's petition and appeals office, whose location is a secret.)

Their lives illustrate the chasm between the government and the people—the one that Gilley rightly noted goes unappreciated by so many policymakers. Despite the greater latitude in contemporary Chinese life, ultimately, they cannot help crossing the Communist party. The government's corruption, mismanagement, and brutality cannot be blamed for the unrest it has created. And so Ma is in jail, and Zhang, protected for a time by publicity from reporting like Johnson's, eventually served time in an extrajudicial administrative detention as well.

Ian Johnson's book is much less ambitious than Gilley's, but in its own way it is just as uncompromising in predicting that change in China will come from these ordinary people. One of his heroes, a lawyer named Feng who defended Ma, provides the best assessment of when that might be. "The current system is at a dead end, but its death is not in sight." ♦

Let's Not Do It

As a film version of Cole Porter's life, De-Lovely *is less than delightful.* **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Hollywood loves homosexuality without reservation—but within reason. Indeed, in movies and on television all portraits of male homosexuality are buffed to a sentimental glow, just so long as certain rules are followed. For example, it's fine for an obviously gay performer to play an openly gay character—if that gay character is a delightful supporting player whose purpose is to serve as foil and sounding-board.

He can be the best friend, the infinitely understanding next-door neighbor, the wacky relative. He cannot be the lead. We're not supposed to identify with him. We're supposed to enjoy his company, to be amused by

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