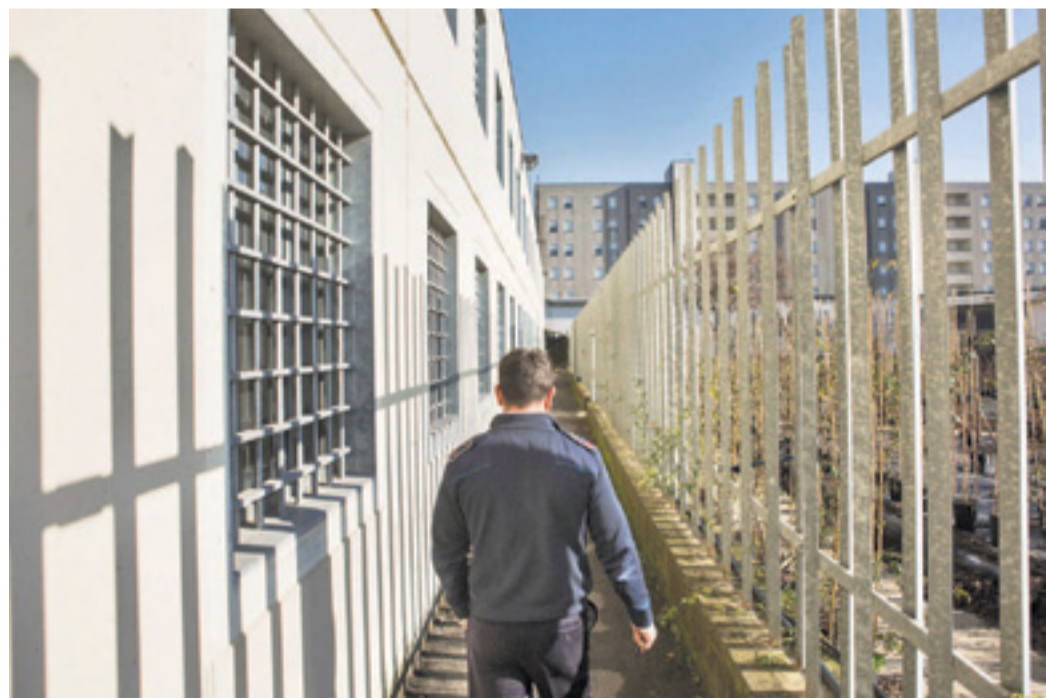


International

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NOT A HOLE IN THE WALL Prison movie posters on the walls at InGalera, top, at the Bellate penitentiary in Milan, as an inmate serves patrons. In the kitchen, center left, an inmate preparing risotto. Center right, amuse-bouche dishes of cheese mousse with mustard, curry and dill awaiting customers. Above, a prison guard. InGalera, Italian slang for “In Prison,” represents an experiment in rehabilitating inmates and confronting public attitudes about them.

Italian Cuisine Worth Going to Prison For

Raves for Restaurant Staffed by Inmates

By JIM YARDLEY

MILAN — The waiters glided through the crowded dining room of InGalera, a restaurant that opened recently to rave reviews. Dinner reservations are almost fully booked for March, and the Milanese elite have taken note. A former bank president came a few weeks ago. So did a former Miss Italy. Families come on weekends.

For Silvia Polleri, the restaurant’s manager and visionary, InGalera is a dizzying triumph, if more because of the locale than because of the food.

It is inside the Bollate penitentiary, a medium-security prison with 1,100 inmates on the outskirts of Milan. The waiters, dishwashers and cooks have been convicted of homicide, armed robbery, drug trafficking and other crimes.

“May I take your plate, sir?” asked a waiter, Carlos, an inmate dressed in a tie, white shirt and black vest as he cleared a table on a recent night.

It is hard to imagine a less likely culinary success story than InGalera, or a more intriguing experiment in rehabilitating inmates — and confronting public attitudes about them.

Few people think of prisons as a place for a nice night out, yet the novelty of going to the prison grounds for food and drink has resonated, and even become

something of a marketing tool.

Ms. Polleri decided that the best way to reassure patrons was to take a wink-wink approach. The name, InGalera, is Italian slang for “In Prison.”

The restaurant’s design is sleek, airy and modern, but the walls are decorated with posters from famous prison movies, including “Escape From Alcatraz” with Clint Eastwood.

Curiosity about a forbidden and feared world has turned a night at InGalera into a daring adventure, with a fine meal as a bonus. (It has a rating of 4.5 out of 5 stars on TripAdvisor.)

“We wanted to see the reality here,” said Carla Borghi, who came with a group of couples from the nearby town of Paderno Dugnano. “It is not the classic restaurant. But it is a classic restaurant. The food is excellent.”

For years, Italy has struggled with its prison system, as well as how to balance punishment with rehabilitation. Overcrowding had become such a problem that in January 2013 the European Court of Human Rights ordered the country to fix the system.

Italian lawmakers responded with more alternative measures for minor crimes. In 2014, Italy also repealed harsh drug sentencing laws enacted

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In New Plan, China Wagers on Economic Growth to Dull Pain of Needed Cuts

By CHRIS BUCKLEY and KEITH BRADSHER

BEIJING — As economic growth has fallen while debts and excess industrial output have risen, Chinese leaders have faced growing questions about whether they will carry out the painful policy surgery many experts say is needed to cut away the financial dead weight on the economy.

But the answer that Prime Minister Li Keqiang gave on Saturday was to wager that China could enjoy a relatively painless cure that avoids hard choices between spurring growth and restructuring. Chinese leaders’ usual two-sided rhetoric about their options — peril is close at hand, but so is a sure cure — was especially striking in Mr. Li’s latest annual report to the legislature, the National People’s Congress.

“Domestically, problems and risks that have been building up over the years are becoming more evident,” Mr. Li told the roughly 3,000 delegates to the congress, a Communist Party-controlled body. But “there is no difficulty we cannot get beyond,” he said in the speech, which was broadcast live nationwide. Continued economic growth of

at least 6.5 percent can be achieved in 2016, and a similar rate is foreseeable until 2020, he said. That, Mr. Li suggested, would help dull the pain from cuts to wheezing state-supported industries that must shed millions of workers, as part of a program that China’s powerful president, Xi Jinping, has promoted as “supply-side structural reform.”

The Chinese economy, Mr. Li said, is “hugely resilient and has enormous potential and ample room for growth.”

Those may have been reassuring words for workers worried about losing their jobs at failing mines, steel mills and industrial plants. Mr. Li said the government’s policies could help create more than 10 million jobs in towns and cities this year, and more than 50 million by the end of 2020.

But many economists and investors have become much less confident that China can manage such rates of unstinting growth without piling up more bad lending and misused capital.

“I think the 6.5 percent growth target is very challenging,” Shen Janguang, the Hong Kong-based chief Asia economist at Mizuho Securities Asia, said after hearing Mr. Li’s plans. “They want to

choose a path that maintains real growth now and defers tough times for later.”

A growth rate of 6.5 percent a year is the minimum needed to achieve President Xi’s often-declared goal of doubling the size of the Chinese economy by 2020, relative to its size in 2010.

“As the government report said, setting this target is also aimed at anchoring expectations and confidence,” Tao Wang, the chief China economist for UBS in Hong Kong, said in emailed comments. “We think this ambitious growth target signals more policy easing.”

But such financial easing implies more debt, at a time when many Western economists and policy makers are already worried that total leverage in the Chinese economy has far outstripped economic output. The increased debt may help the government achieve its target of 6.5 percent to 7 percent economic growth this year, but at the price of burdening banks with even more loans to struggling businesses, or even effectively insolvent ones. That policy may also water down leaders’ promises to shut companies that are producing unwanted industrial goods.



A band conductor at the National People’s Congress, where Prime Minister Li Keqiang gave his annual report on Saturday.

Some economists said the Chinese government had little choice but to shore up demand through such policies until the benefits of restructuring accumulated. But several also warned that the gains from such spending were tapering off and that the efforts to revamp the economy had lagged, despite bold promises made by Mr. Xi at a Communist Party meeting in 2013.

“In China we have a new say-

ing: ‘Reform running idle,’” said Yao Yang, an economics professor at Peking University.

“We talk of the reforms, but the reforms are never being implemented. That’s the problem,” Mr. Yao said. “We know that monetary expansion is not going to have a huge effect.”

In his speech, Mr. Li appeared guarded about saying how any cuts would be administered. He did not specify how many work-

ers could lose their jobs as part of the government’s plan to close, merge or restructure mines and factories weighed down by excess capacity.

The government will set aside \$15.3 billion to support laid-off workers and hard-hit areas, he said. On Monday, a labor official estimated that 1.8 million workers in the steel and coal sectors would be laid off, around 15 percent of the work force in those industries.

“They definitely are relatively cautious in those areas like how boldly we tackle excess capacity, because they still want to grow,” said Louis Kuijs, the chief Asia economist for Oxford Economics, an independent research firm. “What I am particularly worried about is the overcapacity is probably going to get worse before it gets better, given the timidity of the approach.”

To a surprising extent, the economic vision unveiled by Mr. Li echoed policies in the United States, the European Union and Japan, all of which have depended heavily on their central banks to expand money supply and keep growth aloft. The International Monetary Fund and many

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Defamation Laws Give South Korea an Anti-Dissent Tool, Critics Say

Charges Follow Scandal Rumor

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — In late 2014, months after 304 people died in the sinking of a South Korean ferry, a leaflet began circulating with a scurrilous rumor about President Park Geun-hye: that she had failed to respond swiftly to the disaster that day because she was having a romantic encounter with a former aide.

Was Ms. Park, the flier asked, now cracking down on her critics in an attempt to keep that scandal from coming to light?

For Park Sung-su, an antigovernment campaigner who had distributed the leaflet — and who is not related to the president (Park is a common surname here) — the consequences soon followed. He was arrested and later sentenced to a year in prison, on charges of defaming the president and staging illegal protests against his prosecutors. He was freed in December after eight months, when a court suspended his sentence.

No evidence supporting the rumor has been produced, and prosecutors said they had investigated and found it groundless. But however dubious the leaflet might have been, opponents of the government say Mr. Park became another victim of the very thing he was denouncing: the government's use of defamation and other laws to silence its critics, which rights advocates say is on the rise.

Last year, the United Nations Human Rights Committee warned against South Korea's "increasing use of criminal defamation laws to prosecute persons who criticize government action." Freedom House, a rights group based in Washington, criticized "the increased intimidation of political opponents" under Ms. Park, who took office in 2013.

"The government is especially sensitive about defending the personal reputation of the president," said Park Kyung-sin, a professor of law at Korea University who has researched the issue.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression. But defamation laws here carry penalties that include prison — up to three years for comments that are true and up to seven for statements



Park Sung-su, a political activist, protesting in front of the Supreme Court in Seoul, South Korea, last month. The sign, in Korean, reads, "Bite it off, you dogs of power." Mr. Park was freed in December after being jailed on charges of defaming the president.

considered false — if they are deemed not in the public interest. Critics say the distinction is vague and opens the door to abuse by prosecutors.

The government's use of the laws against critics predates Ms. Park's presidency. During the five-year tenure of her predecessor, Lee Myung-bak, 30 such cases were filed, 24 of them criminal and six civil, according to People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, an influential South Korean civic group. But under Ms. Park, the trend increased considerably, with 22 cases filed in her first two and a half years in office, the group said. Of those, 18 were criminal prosecutions.

"They don't seem to care whether they win these cases," the group said in a recent report, noting that the officials often lose in court. "The real purpose is to create a chilling effect among people criticizing and scrutinizing the government."

Ms. Park's office rejected such

criticism, saying all democratic rights were protected.

Charges that her administration was suppressing political rights sprang up almost as soon as Ms. Park — whose father, the military dictator Park Chung-hee, ruled South Korea with an iron fist during the 1960s and '70s — assumed office.

In 2013, the National Intelligence Service, a powerful spy agency that her father used to torture and silence dissidents, moved to disband an outspoken progressive party. The agency arrested the party's leaders on charges of violating the Cold War-era National Security Law, which bans activities deemed pro-North Korean.

Distrust of the spy agency deepened after it was accused of interfering on Ms. Park's behalf during the 2012 presidential campaign. A former director of the agency, Won Sei-hoon, was convicted of running a team of officers who posted comments online criticizing Ms. Park's ri-

vals before the election. In 2014, agency employees were convicted of fabricating Chinese immigration documents to concoct a spy case against an ethnic Chinese refugee from North Korea.

When human rights lawyers and journalists brought those tactics to light in 2013, saying the agency was resorting to old habits of coercion and faking evidence, counterintelligence officials responded by filing defamation cases.

The government's use of the defamation laws became a diplomatic issue when Japan complained after the 2014 indictment of Tatsuya Kato, a journalist from the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun, for reporting the rumor about Ms. Park and her former aide.

An opposition lawmaker, Park Jie-won, said the indictment had embarrassed the country. "It's prosecutors who should be indicted for defaming South Korea," he said.

Mr. Kato was acquitted in December. But Mr. Park, the lawmaker, has been charged with defamation after airing suspicions that the former aide and others close to the president had arranged for favored officials to

be promoted. Presidential aides sued six journalists from a South Korean newspaper for reporting similar allegations, which Ms. Park's office denied.

Besides the defamation laws, the government's use of the National Security Law has long been seen by international human rights groups, as well as the United States State Department, as a threat to free speech. Since 2014, a Chinese student and a Korean-American lecturer have been deported for comments seen as sympathetic to North Korea. Longstanding fears of the North, especially among conservatives, have stymied efforts to repeal or revise the law.

Attempts to amend the defamation laws have also been unsuccessful. Last month, the Constitutional Court struck down a proposal to ban defamation charges in cases where the supposedly defamatory comment circulated online is true. Bills that would bar government officials from filing defamation cases have stalled in Parliament.

Ms. Park's governing party has pushed what it calls anti-terrorism legislation through Parliament after her office warned of possible terrorist at-

tacks from North Korea in the wake of the North's recent nuclear test. Opposition lawmakers say the bill would give the National Intelligence Service, which has a history of illegally wiretapping politicians, journalists and others, more power to monitor not just terrorism suspects but also government critics, particularly online.

"I can never support this attempt to place a dog collar on the people," Eun Soo-mi, an opposition lawmaker who was once tortured by the spy agency, said during a 10-hour filibuster against the bill, which was approved but has not yet become law. (Thirty-eight opposition lawmakers, some referring to Big Brother, from George Orwell's novel "1984," filibustered against the bill in a series of speeches for a record eight days.)

The government's policing of the Internet, a popular channel for antigovernment grievances, was already an issue under Ms. Park. In 2014, after months of withering criticism about how she had handled the ferry disaster, Ms. Park warned that some of it had gone "too far." Prosecutors soon announced a crackdown on "false or defamatory data in cyberspace."

Kakao Talk, a popular smartphone-based messenger service, then admitted that it had been cooperating with the police and prosecutors to collect the online chat records of thousands of users, including antigovernment demonstrators. Last month, a court ruled in favor of one of those protesters, concluding that the inspection of her records was unlawful because it had been conducted without her knowledge.

Such rulings aside, critics argue that South Korean prosecutors and judges have largely failed to protect the public's rights, often because they want to earn the favor of politicians who can promote them.

"People are lamenting that there are no watchdogs, but only dogs," Kwon Seok-cheon, a columnist for the newspaper Joong-Ang Ilbo, recently wrote.

Park Sung-su, the activist who spread the rumor about the president and her former aide, made use of the same metaphor after police officers raided his home. He called them "running dogs for the government," later throwing dog food at the gates of police stations. In April, he was arrested on the charge of staging an illegal rally and then interrogated after he and several other activists had shouted, "Bow wow!" in front of a prosecutors' office.

"They kept asking me what was the political meaning of 'bow wow,'" he said.

Restaurant Staffed by Inmates Brings Diners to Prison in Italy

From Page 6

during the 1990s, similar to the "three strikes" laws in the United States. In 2014, Italy began releasing 10,000 inmates (of roughly 60,000) who had been convicted of minor offenses.

But the issue of how best to rehabilitate offenders — and lower the recidivism rate — remained difficult. Italy has long allowed inmates in medium-security prisons to move around the facilities during the day.

"The main problem has been that they do little during the day, which doesn't help them at the present, nor for their future outside prisons," said Alessio Scandurra, who works for Antigone, a nonprofit group focused on the rights of detainees.

The Bollate prison was at the vanguard of experimentation even before opening the restaurant. Under the director, Massimo Parisi, the prison offers an array of programs. Companies have work programs on prison grounds. Volunteers teach theater and painting. Carpentry skills are taught in workshops equipped with power drills and saws. Inmates maintain a stable of horses in the prison yard.

There is also an initiative involving a carefully vetted group of 200 inmates who are allowed to leave each day for jobs with an outside firm. Inmates travel without supervision on public transportation; they must check in upon arrival at work, and at other points during the day.

Mr. Parisi said only one inmate had failed to return at the appointed time, and he showed up a few days later.

But sending out inmates is different from asking law-abiding citizens to come in for a meal.

"Our first worry was: Who would come?" Mr. Parisi said. "But many people are coming. People are curious about prisons. It is an unknown world to many people. That creates interest."

The force behind the project is Ms. Polleri, who spent 22 years teaching kindergarten before be-



Silvia Polleri, the manager of InGalera, at the restaurant. "People looked at me like I was crazy," she said of her idea.

coming a caterer and later founding a social co-op in 2004 to help inmates. She hired select inmates from Bollate for catering jobs outside the prison. Once, she took a convicted bank robber to wait on tables at a reception in a bank.

But the idea of starting a restaurant was an altogether different challenge.

"People looked at me like I was crazy," she said. "They also thought I was crazy when I said I wanted to name it InGalera. But I wanted to stop talking about this in a sweet way."

She solicited grants from sponsors, including PricewaterhouseCoopers, the accounting firm, and a local architect designed the restaurant's interior for free. It is on the ground floor of the dormitory for prison guards; inmates are housed in a different part of the prison. She hired a maître d' — who seats guests and handles the money — and a professional chef, Ivan Manzo, who was unfazed by working with convicts.

"I've seen a lot of crazy people working in kitchens outside of here!" Mr. Manzo said.

In the kitchen, inmates were busily preparing dishes as one, Mirko, was showing another how to make tarts. Inmates are paid up to 1,000 euros a month to work in the restaurant, and share tips.

"It is a matter of pride, a way to make people happy and show them that even inmates can change and evolve," said Mirko,

who like the other inmates wanted to be identified only by his first name.

Ms. Polleri says that she realizes the restaurant may bother some people and that she does not want to offend victims of crime. But she argued that prisons must train inmates to become responsible citizens capable of re-entering society, and noted that the recidivism rate of inmates in similar programs is far lower than average.

Before the dinner crowd arrived on a recent night, Ms. Polleri hovered over the waiters, reminding Carlos to "walk straight." Her most nerve-racking moment came in early December when she learned that a food critic for one of the country's most important newspapers, Corriere della Sera, had secretly come for dinner one night and was preparing a review.

"I couldn't sleep for a week," Ms. Polleri said. The critic praised the food, the waiters and the "convivial atmosphere." He even praised the prices, which are more reasonable than most Milanese restaurants. "To have honest prices," he wrote, "you have to come to jail."

Looking across the dining room, Ms. Polleri pointed to the guests enjoying their meals. "This is the revolution," she said. "A lot of these people before didn't know where the prison was."

Gaia Pianigiani contributed reporting.

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