

# Visionary who saw a sleeping giant sees a century of Chinese auto domination

**A**mid the enthusiasm about China's auto boom, Carl Hahn has been the forgotten man. As **Volkswagen's** chairman from 1982 to 1993, Hahn thrust the company into Spain, Czechoslovakia, Mexico and South America — and, most important, China.

Hahn beat the rest of the auto world to the Middle Kingdom through a joint venture with Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp. But his reputation took a thrashing when China and other emerging markets collapsed in the late 1990s. Still, he



**Carl Hahn: And after China, India**

remained a true believer.

Some see him as a visionary, and his vision for China remains robust. At a conference in Seoul last week, **Hahn, 83**, called China "today's locomotive." Last year "saw the

closing chapter of the dominance of the American automobile industry," Hahn told the Seoul forum, a conference hosted by the *Seoul Economic Daily*.

In 2009, China passed Japan to rank first among countries in vehicle production, with 13.8 million units. Japan was second with 7.9 million, followed by the United States with 5.8 million.

Hahn says China will rank first among all nations in vehicle production "for the rest of this century, until India overtakes it."