

In the last few years, as Canada's foreign relations have expanded and grown in complexity, there has been an increasing awareness among Canadians of these relations. As more Canadians every year travel abroad, there is a greater appreciation of our overseas activities and a greater interest in them. With this has come -- quite understandably -- a questioning of some of our ways of going about our international business.

It might be useful, therefore, if I describe how the Government sees the purpose of our missions abroad. I want particularly to touch on three related areas, about which there has been a certain amount of discussion in the press and in correspondence to me or to my colleagues in the Government.

These are:

- 1) Recognition of Regimes;
- 2) Consular protection of Canadians; and
- 3) Asylum

Since earliest times, the problem of the protection and advancement of national interests in other countries has been considered an essential national requirement.

From the early Greek writers, especially Thucydides, we have descriptions of the situation which existed in the centuries before Christ in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the methods devised for establishing relations between different communities. The various Greek city states existed in their separate valleys, and in earliest times regarded strangers as being by definition hostile. It was into this unpromising international -- or intercommunal -- atmosphere that the idea was born of sending emissaries or envoys to discuss mutual problems and to resolve disputes.

These early envoys were, at first, often seized and, we are told, cast down wells, before discussions could begin, simply because they were strangers. But the concept that one state might wish to speak with another state by means of an envoy was a very strong one. To overcome the difficulties of establishing this dialogue, a convention became accepted that the persons of these envoys, or heralds as they were called, were sacred. This was the beginning of the idea of diplomatic privileges and immunities.

The diplomat was born of a need of essentially hostile states to find some method of communication. There was an early understanding that national interests transcended borders. It is this same concept -- the need for dialogue -- which prompts the Canadian decision to make arrangements to send representatives to another country. The basic reason for this gesture is a national one; the advancement of the national interest. The most obvious external interest, that is still perhaps the strongest single force in international affairs, is the exchange of goods: in a word, trade.

In its paper "Foreign Policy for Canadians" issued in 1970, the Canadian Government summed up what it meant by foreign policy in these words: "In essence, foreign policy is the product of the Government's progressive definition and pursuit of national aims and interests in the international environment. It is the extension abroad of national policies."