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No. 72/21 CANADA AND A NEW WORLD POWER -- CHINA

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, to the Ontario Region of the Canadian Junior Chamber of Commerce, Toronto, October 14, 1972.

...China's emergence as a world power is one of the most important developments in current international politics. Canada's recognition of the People's Republic of China just two years ago yesterday, and Canada's part in the assumption by Peking of China's seat in the United Nations, are among the most important developments in Canadian foreign policy of the last two decades. What do these developments mean for Canadians? ...What may we expect from this new relationship with a government representing one-quarter of mankind? What should we learn not to expect? I have ideas on all these matters, based in part on impressions I gained during a ten-day visit to China in August. I am glad to have this opportunity to share these ideas with you.

First, some history: In April 1949, the Chinese Communist Army entered Nanking. This was the old capital of the Nationalist Government, where the embassies of foreign governments were located. Among these was the Canadian Embassy, for Canada recognized the Nationalist Government. The occupation of Nanking symbolized the end of Canada's old relationship with China. This relationship was to remain broken for over 20 years. It was not restored until October 13, 1970, when Canada and the People's Republic of China entered into diplomatic relations.

During those 20 years, Canada's relations with China were at best non-existent and at worst, dangerously bad. It was clear from the beginning that the Peking Government was effectively in control of its territory and people. In other words, it met some of the classic tests for recognition. Successive Canadian Governments between 1949 and 1968 therefore examined the possibility of entering into official relations. But for years, there were serious obstacles to doing so.

Soon after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Canada and China were involved on opposite sides in the Korean War. That made it impossible for any Canadian Government to consider establishing relations with Peking either during the hostilities in Korea or in the atmosphere of bitterness that followed. But, in the intervening years, spokesmen for the Canadian Government speculated publicly, at the United