

to "join in the spontaneous demonstration by the Chinese people against the American imperialists to protest their spying activities". Naturally, they declined. But they did not want to miss what promised to be the largest demonstration of mass hysteria ever held. After lunch, Forsyth-Smith and Small, who was fluent in Mandarin, stole out of the hotel and lost themselves in the crowds flowing into the Square. Just as they were congratulating themselves on successfully blending in, an armed patrol arrested them and escorted the duo back to their hotel. They had been under surveillance all the time, and had, it seemed, incurred the wrath of the Chinese by refusing the official invitation. The Canadians passed the remainder of the day watching from their hotel window as thousands of people were bussed in for the "spontaneous demonstration".

Although neither of the Trade Commissioners realized it then, their presence in China during those years was vitally important to the Chinese leadership. The disastrous consequences of "the Great Leap Forward" were being felt throughout the country and this, coupled with a terrible drought, had created the worst famine since 1879. Canadian wheat helped lessen the starvation and suffering that Mao's great gamble had caused.

The effects of the famine were also felt

at Lo Wu bridge, the border crossing between Hong Kong and the PRC. Not 27 miles from Kowloon, the little village was becoming flooded with refugees escaping starvation. In that year of 1959, an estimated 35,000 illegal immigrants crossed into Hong Kong, disappearing into the concrete blocks of the new estates. But these people ensured the future prosperity of the Colony, for they provided the cheap labour and industrial expertise that transformed the entrepot into an industrial giant. When Charles Forsyth-Smith was succeeded by Robert Thomson in 1962, Hong Kong was even experiencing a labour shortage, as new factories spewed forth garments, textiles and plastics.

Robert Thomson, with a degree in Commerce, had fought in the Canadian Army during the War. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947, and served in Bombay, Karachi, Singapore and Vienna before being posted to Hong Kong. The Commission staff that he inherited consisted of two Trade Commissioners – Peter Roberts and John Maldwyn Thomas; a language student and Acting Trade Commissioner – Daniel Molgat, and Norman Gish. The Chief Clerk was Herbert Ling; the Co-ordinating Secretary, Elvie Arnold; the stenographers, Eva Leigh, M. Wong and F. Loh; and Chow King. The Commission now owned one car driven by Lo Ping.



Commissioner and Mrs. Thomson at a reception to show off the new Canadian Flag. August, 1965.