

After much discussion, both sides agreed to a joint communiqué. On the status of Taiwan, it said simply: "the Canadian Government takes note of this position of the Chinese Government". This formula, or one something like it, has been used during the last two years by most of the countries which have followed Canada in establishing relations with Peking. The Sino-Canadian communiqué of October 13, 1970, was the world première of a performance repeated many times since. The formula we worked out with the Chinese has entered the jargon of specialists as "the Canadian formula". Like so many important things, it all seemed so simple once it had been worked out. But remember -- working out this simple formula took almost two years of steady work.

I was proud to announce to the House of Commons that Canada had recognized the People's Republic of China. It was a historic moment. A decisive step arising from the Government's review of foreign policy had taken place.

But I was very much aware that this was just a first step in the development of relations between Canada and China. Even between 1949 and 1970, despite the lack of official relations, there had been contacts in a number of fields. Wheat sales had already made our trade relations with China important. Apart from trade, a few Canadians had travelled to China in those years, seen for themselves something of the Chinese experience, and established contacts with Chinese people. This had been possible, even in the absence of diplomatic relations, because the Canadian Government, unlike some, never put restrictions on travel to China by its citizens. But such contacts, however significant they might have been for individual Canadians involved, were very limited.

At the time of recognition, there remained, in fact, a great deal of ignorance and misconception about China in Canada. The average Chinese did not know much about Canada either. Canada and China had gone their separate ways for 20 years without any official contacts. I was deeply conscious of the need to use recognition to increase mutual understanding. Canadian diplomats and trade experts immediately set to work. The Canadian Embassy in Peking was set up within a few months. Ralph Collins, Canada's first Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, took up his post in June 1971. Chinese diplomats arrived in Ottawa in February 1971. The first Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada, Mr. Huang Hua (now his country's permanent representative to the United Nations), presented his credentials in Ottawa in July of the same year. The process of getting to know each other officially had begun well.

The gap to be bridged was enormous. We were two of the world's largest countries, separated by the world's widest ocean. Ideology had widened the gap geography created. But we were bound to come increasingly into contact. Canada wanted these contacts for the sake of Canadian interests and for the good of the international community at large. China, for its part, was obviously ready for a more outward-looking and more active role on the international scene. Areas where both Canada and China could benefit from more extensive contacts had to be identified and carefully studied.