

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 twenty 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 Canada and China could both benefit from more extensive contacts had to be identified and carefully studied.

A significant step was taken in the summer of 1971 when my colleague, Jean-Luc Pepin, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, led an important delegation of Canadian officials and businessmen to the People's Republic of China. This mission, the first Canadian Government mission to visit China, sought to establish close contacts with Chinese Ministers, officials and business representatives in all spheres of economic and commercial activity. This objective was fully achieved. During the three working days the Canadian group spent in Peking, no less than 25 separate formal meetings were arranged with representatives of each of the seven state trading corporations responsible for China's export and import trade, with the People's Bank of China and with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Through first-hand contact with the Chinese economic Ministries and with the foreign trading corporations, the members of the Pepin mission were able to advise the Chinese in considerable detail of the range, variety and technical sophistication of the many products which Canada could supply to the Chinese market. Much of this was new to the Chinese. A good deal of attention was also given to exploring with the Chinese those areas where they might expand their exports to Canada to the benefit of both countries.

The first mission quickly produced results. We agreed with the Chinese to exchange missions in areas of particular commercial interest to both our countries, to hold trade exhibitions in each other's country and also to hold periodic consultations on trade matters. In the course of this visit, Foreign Minister Pai Hsiang-kuo accepted an invitation to visit Canada with a Chinese trade delegation. From the Canadian viewpoint, one of the most significant achievements of Mr. Pepin's mission was China's agreement "to consider Canada first" as a source of wheat. Canadian traders and farmers could be well satisfied that the official phase of our trade relations with the Chinese had begun so well.