

# Policy

## FOREIGN

### Asia: Prime Minister's Trip

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau promoted trade between Canada and Asian countries during his eighteen-day trip in January to the five countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and to Brunei and Japan. Because the Canadian economy is dependent on export industries, the development of new markets in the ASEAN countries was seen by the government as one cure for the ailing economy. Annual Canadian trade with the ASEAN countries had tripled since 1975, but was still at less than one billion dollars, or 0.6 percent of Canada's total annual trade. Because these countries — Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia — have fared better than most in the present global recession, Canadian government and business people have been encouraging increased trade with that region (*The Citizen*, December 31). Mr. Trudeau's visit was not designed to negotiate specific agreements, but to give Canada a higher profile in the countries by meeting political and business leaders and Canadian representatives in the area.

Before departing to the Asian countries, the Prime Minister spent two days in Vancouver meeting business representatives from across Canada who have commercial dealings in "Pacific Rim" nations.

### Thailand

The Asian trip began in Thailand, where the Prime Minister arrived January 5. He was greeted in Bangkok by Thai Premier Prem Tinsulanond. One of the first items on Mr. Trudeau's agenda was a ninety-minute meeting with ten Canadian businessmen based in Bangkok. Canada's trade with Thailand had only totalled \$149 million in 1981. Ambassador Fred Bild explained that Canada's late start meant that it would take a long time to develop the trade potential. He told reporters that he believed that increased Canadian investment in the area would be followed by increased trade (*Globe and Mail*, January 5).

Trade between the two countries was a major topic of discussion between Mr. Trudeau and General Prem on January 5. Also discussed was the topic of the resettlement of refugees from Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos who are living in Thai refugee camps. It is estimated that up to

200,000 refugees remain in Thailand, while other countries, including Canada, have cut their quotas of refugees because of poor economic health. Canada slashed its quota for 1983 to 3,000, which is 1,000 less than 1982. Mr. Trudeau was questioned by reporters in Bangkok about the representation made to the Thai Premier on Canada's position. Mr. Trudeau explained that he had made it clear to Premier Prem that Canada was presently restricted or hampered in its capacity by the high number of unemployed in Canada.

At the news conference January 6, Mr. Trudeau also discussed the opportunities for Canadian business in the area. He said that in the Canadian business community in Thailand, he had found much enthusiasm about the potential there. "Thai people and governments seem to be deliberately following a policy of diversification to make sure that they don't have all their eggs in one basket, whether it be trading or foreign investment. And this is a bonanza for Canada because we can be one supplier of many, and though we are not the largest of the industrial nations, because we have the technology, the know-how in specific areas, and astute businessmen in other areas, I think it is a great opportunity for us," Mr. Trudeau told reporters.

Three agreements, negotiated earlier, were signed by the two countries during the visit — a prisoner exchange pact; an assistance agreement called the General Agreement on Development Cooperation; and an investment guarantee for Canadian businessmen which would allow them to claim damages at home for any harm done them by the Thai government (*Globe and Mail*, January 5). On January 6, Mr. Trudeau opened a joint Canada-ASEAN forest tree-seed centre, a project to provide badly-needed seeds for reforestation in rural Thailand.

### Singapore

On January 7, Mr. Trudeau arrived in Singapore, Canada's number one trading partner in Southeast Asia. Export possibilities to Singapore include a share of a three-to-five billion dollar rapid transit project for that city. There are at least twenty-five Canadian companies planning to bid on the huge project. Some Canadian businessmen were invited to Prime Minister Trudeau's meeting with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on January 7. Bombardier Co. executive Raymond Royer told reporters later that in sectors of excellence, like the mass transit sector, Canada