



Assistant Trade Commissioner C.J. Small and his wife just before his departure for Peking.

over Taiwan's trade relations. This did occur in 1958. With the end of the French regime in Indo-China, trade with Canada began to improve.

But it was trade with the PRC that Forsyth-Smith hoped to encourage. In 1957, the John Diefenbaker Government promised that the China market would be "opened up" to Canadian exporters. The Trade Commission in Hong Kong had recommended that the Government encourage Canadian businessmen in this. Early that year, Marshall Johnson, a member of the Canadian Communist Party visited the PRC and returned to Canada with great enthusiasm for bilateral trade. He claimed that he had firm orders for Canadian products, and received national media coverage at home. One claim was that he had a large order for Canadian automobiles, but that he could not obtain them because of American laws that prevented U.S. owned companies trading with the PRC. The Canadian public was outraged, and the fuss generated went some way to raising Government interest in the China market.

Then one day, a telegram marked "Secret" arrived on Forsyth-Smith's desk. Since the Trade Commission did not have communications facilities, the cipher from Ottawa had been routed through the Colonial Office in London, and then the Governor in Hong Kong. He saw, to his horror, a distribution list had been added locally. In addition to the Governor, it included the Colonial Secretary, the Commander British Forces, the Chief of Police, the Political Advisor, the Financial Secretary and the Trade Secretary. The Canadian officer was obviously the last to get the "Secret" message, because as he read it, he was told the Political Advisor was waiting outside to discuss it with him! Forsyth-Smith reported this to Ottawa, and within days the Canadian Trade Commission got its first telex machine.

The Political Secretary was Murray MacLehose, later Governor of Hong Kong, and he was most concerned about the contents of the cipher. It instructed Forsyth-Smith to proceed to China immediately, and assess prospects for the sale of Canadian products, especially wheat. The trip was to be done in total secrecy, the message said, and it should last a week. He was to plead illness during his absence from Hong Kong. He was told the visit was to be a personal one, and that the Canadian Government would disavow any knowledge of it.

Once he digested the contents and discussed it with William Miner, the Assistant Trade Commissioner, Forsyth-Smith realized that there was no way now the visit could be kept secret, and in any case, the departure of the daily train to Canton was well covered by local "China Watchers" and the U.S. Consulate. He recommended instead that the trip be announced as a routine visit by a Canadian Trade Officer. The Deputy Minister for External Affairs in Ottawa, Mitchell Sharpe, agreed. In early November, the first Canadian Government representative to enter China since 1949, did so.

The Trade Commissioner was accompanied by Tom Pope, a Chinese language student and junior officer, and the accounts of their month long trip into the heart of the dragon makes for exciting reading. In 1958, the PRC purchased ten shiploads of Canadian wheat in "a gesture of goodwill in recognition of the trip". This, the first of many wheat