

Nations and elsewhere, about how contacts could be established with the People's Republic of China on terms acceptable not only to the Chinese but to the international community generally. The central problem was that the Nationalist Government in Taipei and the Peking Government both claimed to be the sole legal government of China. Any formula for entering into relations with the Peking Government had to deal successfully with the dilemma posed by these mutually exclusive claims.

For years, no such successful formula could be found. Meanwhile, Canadian Governments tried to avoid making the problem worse for themselves. Between 1949 and 1968, official Canadian representation abroad doubled, but no Canadian embassy was ever opened in Taipei. In 1966, instead of voting against the annual resolution proposed by Albania in the United Nations, which would have given the China seat to Peking and unseated Taipei, Canada shifted to an abstention. Decisions like these looked forward to a time when it would be possible for Canada to recognize Peking.

The Prime Minister decided in 1968 that the time had come. In his election campaign in May of that year, Mr. Trudeau declared that it would be the aim of his Government to recognize the People's Republic of China as soon as possible and to support the right of that Government to occupy China's seat at the United Nations.

How quickly times change! When the newly-elected Government undertook a review of this country's China policy, some expressed doubts. We were asked why a change was necessary. Such questions seem inconceivable today. Events have shown how well-timed the Canadian move was. In this, we anticipated history more accurately than some of our friends. At the time, we said Canada had to act in accordance with the realities of international life. The Government in Peking was the effective government of China. It had been so for almost 20 years. How could we have gone on ignoring this fact? This seems obvious now. It was less so to many people four years ago. But in the intervening years, following Canada's example, and generally for the same reasons, close to 30 nations have established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. How much credit can Canada take for this turn of events? I cannot say. The Chinese certainly believe Canadian action was influential. I am satisfied, anyway, that the Government made the right decision at the right time.

So we had decided to negotiate with the Chinese about recognition. The next puzzle to many people was, why was it taking so long? The Sino-Canadian talks on recognition lasted 20 months. There is no great secret about the reason for this. The problem was Taiwan. From the very first meeting in Stockholm in February 1969, the Chinese side made clear to us their position that Taiwan was an inalienable part of the territory of China. This was a principle to which the Chinese Government attached the utmost importance. We too made Canada's position clear from the start: the Canadian Government neither endorsed nor challenged the Chinese Government's position on the status of Taiwan. This remains Canada's position to this day.