



Christine Desloges with the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Chen Shipai, testing trade prospects on Hainan Island, 1987.

master of disguise, was changing its water-front face yet again – and the Canadian Commission was in the midst of it. It had become as, Maurice Copithorne, the Commissioner since 1984, remarked, “a world class post”. The fitting-out of the four floors fell to the new Administration Officer, Dan Mysak – a veteran of a Chancery move in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Maurice Hladik was posted as Senior Trade Commissioner in 1985, and Hanafi was replaced by Lynda Watson. The blossoming Trade Program was joined by an Investment Program in 1986, a consequence of the new Investment Canada Act which promoted, rather than discouraged, foreign investment into Canada. Hong Kong was chosen as one of only seven posts in the world to promote investment, and in its first two years, proved to be one of the most successful.

The political and economic situation in Hong Kong remained surprisingly stable throughout 1985 and 1986. But a lot was going on in China.

As a result of the quickly spreading modernization program, and the subsequent decentralization of decision-making, Chinese functionaries at different levels unconsciously began to test the waters, and experiment more in their dealings with foreign traders.

This brought a new flexibility to many business relationships. After a while, they became quite addicted to this new free decision-making method, which in many cases, unfortunately, led to overzealousness, if not outright abuse.

Faced with having to implement the economic responsibility system, Danwei executives resorted to “commercializing” many of the courtesies and protocol services. This meant charging fees for pick-ups at airports, preparation of itineraries for meeting with Chinese officials – the types of services that diplomats would normally provide as a courtesy. Private sector traders faced the same situation.

The wholesale adoption of things “western” in southern China had both good and bad sides. Clean discotheques “for the whole family” sprung up in remote centres such as Nanning, and were officially encouraged on the basis that they provided enjoyable physical exercise for young and old who waltzed, fox-trotted, tangoed, and occasionally jived, to live and recorded music. Refreshments in those gaudishly lit halls ranged from jasmine tea to cans of imported soft drinks, and were accompanied by the omni-present bowls of peanuts and candies.

Travelling in China, even today, whether