

September last year. This is the background against which I came to assume my duty in Ottawa, and the basis on which I have tried to proceed in fulfilment of my task.

During my initial four months in Ottawa I have witnessed a number of developments which have tended to confirm my preconceptions and expectations. In the recent crises of global proportions, Canada's role and standing in the world as the voice of moderation fortified by a keen sense of international responsibility has been re-affirmed and appreciated. Her traditional upholding of humanitarian principles continues to manifest itself in the unwavering provision of reliefs to disaster victims and refugees, including those along the Thai-Cambodian border.

ASEAN-Canada relations have been given a stimulus by the conclusion in September of the co-operation agreement—the first ever to be concluded by ASEAN with an individual dialogue partner. The third dialogue meeting recently held in Manila has assumed special and even historical significance, for from this first joint co-operation committee meeting, as prescribed by the agreement, there will emerge both the crystallization of concrete projects and the common strategy for mutual co-operation.

On the bilateral front, a most significant step was taken with the program review visit in early February of a high-level team from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to consult with the Thai government in an effort to co-ordinate Canadian participation with the current fifth five-year plan. The outcome was the drawing up of a master plan that will form the basis for Canadian co-operation with Thailand over the next five years, with a number of specific fields of priority clearly spelt out.

Significantly, co-operation in the industrial sector will be focussed on mineral exploration and exploitation and the development of energy sources, wherein Canadian advanced technology and expertise will be made available in response to Thailand's pressing needs and requirements.

In this respect, it is a striking and happy coincidence that where Canada excels is exactly where Thailand expects. Indeed, I would even venture to suggest that in the realm of overall resource management, where Canada has had a head start and yet is still grappling with its complexities and implications—economic, social, political or otherwise—Canada's experience can provide useful and even re-assuring guidance to Thailand, where not dissimilar symptoms and problems, engendering at times soul-searching considerations and debates, have begun to surface.

My recollection would not be complete without reference being made to the second Pacific Rim Opportunities Conference held in Toronto in February, which I was invited to attend along with my Ottawa-based diplomatic colleagues from the Pacific Rim countries. Considering that the avowed purpose of the conference was to arouse and stimulate the interest of the Canadian business community in the Pacific Rim region, it was apparent from the high attendance rate and the enthusiasm shown during the deliberations that PROC II was a great success. The message came out loud and clear for more Canadian economic presence in the region. As for ASEAN, it seemed that the positive economic elements common to all of us, especially our consistently high growth rate and favourable business conditions, were put across and well taken note of by Canadian participants. As clear proof of the interest in ASEAN thus aroused, many a business firm has since contacted my ASEAN colleagues in Ottawa and myself as a follow-up seeking detailed information on specific areas of development or even presenting concrete project proposals.

Speaking for myself as a newcomer to Canada, the conference presented a splendid opportunity for me to have first contact with trade and business circles and also with the banking community. I need hardly emphasize the pivotal role of the private sector in the conduct of our over-all economic relations with Canada. On this, Thailand, ASEAN and Canada are in complete agreement and, now, with PROC II as a stimulus, we can look ahead together with confidence to an increasingly active and direct participation by the Canadian private sector in ASEAN's development efforts.

But no matter how vital is the role of the business community in fostering economic ties that now form the substance of today's international relations, there are other elements of the private or non-governmental sector in Canada that, to a foreign diplomat, deserve no less attention on account of their possible contribution to the better understanding between the two countries. I have in mind, in particular, the influential corps of parliamentarians, such leaders of public opinion as the mass media and the academics, and the interested public in general.

The point I am making must be plain to all, for it is the most obvious and readily understandable aspiration of a diplomat stationed in the friendliest of countries to cultivate a totality of friendly relations, not confined to officialdom, based on fair knowledge and appreciation of each others persona and worth, which would, in turn, make possible a solid, multi-dimensional and

lasting link between the two governments and peoples. I feel reassured and gratified that the will to work for such a goal is there on both sides, and that, with past records of our mutual relations as a guide coupled with current encouraging developments, much progress will further be achieved.

It is in this context that I mention, finally and with great satisfaction, events that will definitely prove momentous to the relations between Canada and ASEAN and Thailand. I refer specifically to the participation of Dr. Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, at the dialogue held with ASEAN foreign ministers in Singapore in June, and his subsequent official visit to Thailand, the first such visit by a Canadian foreign minister. Later, in the year, the Prime Minister of Canada will be visiting all the five countries of ASEAN—another first for a Canadian Prime Minister.

These visits signify mutual appreciation of the value of our increasingly closer ties and provide the opportunity for high-level personal contacts as well as for reviewing all aspects of mutual relations and putting them in focus and proper perspective for the future.

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