

but only in the absence of their leaders. They may also speak up if they trust you to be discrete with their comments.

Your Chinese partners may have difficulty with meetings held in a western style. Canadian technical advisors have indicated that meetings are usually held only to give official approval to what has already been negotiated beforehand. There should be no surprises or new material introduced at such meetings. Partners attending the meeting may not have the authority to commit to binding decisions and will be embarrassed or lose face if they are pressed to do so.

Do what can be done, informally, face-to-face. Meet in plenary only when necessary. Take written notes and confirm with your counterparts that what you thought happened at the meeting really did happen.

The highest ranking person in your

group should lead the way in, and be the spokesperson. Do not make the mistake of shaking hands with the interpreter first.

Meetings always begin with informal chitchat over tea. The host will initiate serious talk (an introduction), and then leave time for you to say a few words in response. Respect these exchanges of courtesy. Drink the tea that is served before launching into an explanation of why you have come (you might not even get to it at the first meeting). You may meet an important official only for a few minutes. Time is tight for senior people. Be alert for signals that the meeting should end. The signals include asking you if you would like more tea, beginning to sum things up, thanking you for coming, and leading you to the door. Don't be surprised if you meet for only a few minutes but are invited to dinner that evening. This is the beginning of your relationship. Business will come later.

### ***Negotiations*** ♦ ♦ ♦

Negotiations in China can be a grinding, slow process. Chinese negotiating style is highly structured. It comes from military strategy with which all Chinese are familiar.

Negotiators may play on your impatience and your sense of shame. They may threaten to take their business elsewhere. Be wary of the responsibility

entailed when you become a "trusted old friend." An obligation has been built up. Do not confuse real friendship with business friendship.

Chinese people view negotiations as important social occasions, to foster relationships. They have to convince themselves about the suitability of the