

Fitness Ties that Bind

In January and February 1989, some 800 000 people from 10 cities in Canada and the Soviet Union began an incredible odyssey — an odyssey of health, fitness and friendship that spanned the two largest nations on earth. Each day during the 1989 challenge, people engaged in a 20-minute period of any physical activity. This work-out was logged as 1 km, and the overall goal for both sides was to record the greatest possible distance towards the planet Mars. In total, more than 21 billion km were logged.

The 10 cities that travelled the Fit Trek road last winter grew to an impressive 22 for Fit Trek 1990. And Canada's Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was on hand to launch the event in Moscow's Red Square when he visited the U.S.S.R. last November. Said Mulroney: "We have more in common than we ever thought possible. It is true that we share a common climate and a common love of sport. But we also share a common ethnic diversity, and indeed, many of the ethnic groups that make up the Soviet Union have played vital roles in the building of Canada."

Expanding Trade Ties

Much of the activity of last November's visit focused on expanding trade ties between the two countries. Concurrent with the Prime Minister's visit, a 240-member Canadian business delegation went to the U.S.S.R. under the sponsorship of the newly created Canada-U.S.S.R. Business Council to attend the organi-



Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (right) launching Fit Trek 1990.

More than 15 million Canadians and Soviets took part in the 1990 challenge — with involvement levels comparable to Ottawa's Winterlude Festival or Quebec

City's Carnaval. Canada hopes that bonds established at the grassroots level — through events such as Fit Trek — will provide a solid and healthy foundation for future co-operation and friendship between Canada and the Soviet Union. Both countries expect next year's Fit Trek to be even bigger and better.

zation's inaugural meeting and pursue new business deals with Soviet firms.

During a meeting with Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov, Mulroney noted that there were specific sectors of the Soviet economy where the expertise of Canadian companies could be useful, particularly construction, and oil and gas development. Ryzhkov said that the U.S.S.R. would welcome

assistance to help solve its housing shortage. Mulroney introduced Ryzhkov to Albert Reichmann — president of the Toronto-based multinational corporation, Olympia & York Development Ltd. Ryzhkov subsequently arranged for a future meeting with Reichmann, whose firm recently announced plans to build a \$250-million, 60-storey building in Moscow.

According to Paul Drager, a Calgary-based lawyer and a former commercial official with the Canadian Embassy in Moscow: "It used to be that few people in the Soviet Union knew anything about Canadian business. Now, everybody wants to listen to us." The Canadian business delegation signed a number of agreements representing a potential of more than \$1 billion in direct investment, joint ventures and equity participation arrangements.

Improved Canadian-Soviet Relations

Many of the ties established during the Mulroney visit would have been unimaginable a few years ago and reflect Canada's confidence in President Gorbachev's efforts to reform Soviet economic and political life. Said Mulroney: "Our two countries have embarked on a new beginning in our relationship."

Indeed, Gorbachev described Mulroney as "a policy maker capable of shaping policies consistent with a rapidly changing world." Mulroney, on the other hand, praised Gorbachev as "a great reformer doing remarkable things" and for his "courage and commitment to change."

Mulroney also welcomed a vision of "a new international order, an order where ideas and not weapons can be a nation's first line of defence, where economics is a field of open competition, and where the human spirit can be free to realize humanity's best hopes."

But the Prime Minister's greatest hope was that the two countries had "made a contribution to the building of a more durable international peace, the most important legacy our generation can pass on to its children." 

Bill McCarthy/PMO