

CANADA AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The increasing involvement of the People's Republic of China, following the Cultural Revolution, in contemporary international affairs is one of the more significant factors influencing international politics today. The 1970 review of Canada's external relations, Foreign Policy for Canadians, expressed "the hope that Canada would be able to make a contribution towards bringing China into a more constructive relationship with the world community". While it is impossible to determine the exact measure of Canada's contribution to China's decision to become a more conspicuous actor in international affairs, our role can be considered one of the more important accomplishments of contemporary Canadian foreign policy. Canada's establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1970, and our part in the assumption by Peking of China's seat in the United Nations, contributed substantially to the emergence of China from its earlier isolation.

Canadian missionaries and merchants provided Canada's earliest contacts with China in the late 19th century. In 1906 the Canadian Government opened a Commercial Office in Shanghai. Although a Chinese Consulate General was established in Ottawa, with offices in Vancouver, Toronto, and Winnipeg, prior to 1909, an ambassadorial exchange was not agreed upon until 1941. It was not until April 1943 that a Canadian legation was established in China.

From January 1938 to November 1939 a Canadian, Dr. Norman Bethune, provided important medical services to the Chinese Eighth Route Army in the war with Japan. Dr. Bethune was a prominent thoracic surgeon in Canada and in 1936 organized the Canadian Mobile Blood Transfusion Service in Spain during the Civil War. After a brief return to Canada he went to China where he died in 1939 after contracting blood poisoning while performing an operation. Mao Tse-tung wrote "In Memory of Norman Bethune" after the doctor's death. This tribute became one of the three most commonly read articles in China during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's. Consequently, Bethune has become one of the best-known