



Statements and Speeches

No. 73/21

NEW CANADIAN TIES WITH CHINA

A Statement by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the House of Commons, October 19, 1973.

...I should like to report to Honourable Members on my visit to China, which, as the House knows, concluded just a few hours ago.

The invitation to me to visit the People's Republic of China was first extended by Premier Chou En-lai two years ago and was renewed again several months ago.

We left Canada with high expectations. I am able to say that the willingness of the Chinese Government to accept our point of view and to engage with us in activities of benefit for the people of Canada more than met those expectations. The high degree of interest of the Chinese Government in Canada and the willingness of that Government to work towards the maintenance and strengthening of friendly relations with Canada was made evident by the amount of time they, the Chinese leaders, were willing to devote to me and to my party. Chairman Mao Tse-tung extended to me the courtesy of a long conversation. Premier Chou En-lai met with me for many hours of formal discussions over the course of several days and chatted with me at even greater length in informal circumstances on a number of occasions.

One of the main objectives of any visit by a head of government, whether a Canadian travelling abroad or a prime minister coming here, is to ensure that each country understands the policies of the other and the circumstances which give rise to those policies. It is seldom possible to come to agreement on the wisdom or the effectiveness of all policies, nor would one expect that this could be the case in a world in which the vagaries of history, the realities of geography, and the variations of social systems lend distinctive directions and points of view to governmental policies. What I found most heartening, however, in my discussions with the Chinese leaders was their understanding of, and sympathy for, Canada's foreign policy. In particular, I was not subjected to any demands that future Canadian relations with China would depend for their warmth on our attitudes towards any other country. I stated in Peking, both in the privacy of conversation with the Premier and on public occasions, that Canadian foreign policy sought to avoid tension, to strengthen the institutions of international co-operation and to assist the economic development of the newly-

independent countries. I said as well that, in my belief, the true measurement of national greatness was found not in military might or in political ceremony but in the willingness of a country to recognize the importance of individual welfare, human dignity and a sense of personal accomplishment and fulfillment.

Many of the issues which were discussed with the Chinese leaders, and in the several committees of officials that were established during the course of the visit, reflected these beliefs and the desire of Canada to expand its international trade.

Premier Chou and I signed a formal trade agreement that will serve as a framework for the development of trade between Canada and China for the next three years....

Honourable Members will find that this agreement establishes a joint trade committee, which will meet annually. The Canadian suggestion that the committee address itself immediately to the areas of transportation, forestry and agriculture was accepted by the Chinese. Agreement was reached as well that detailed discussions should be initiated quickly in the fields of aluminum and wood pulp. We also agreed that further discussions should take place soon with respect to potash, sulphur and nickel. The Canadian side was heartened by the obvious Chinese interest in increasing the purchase of Canadian manufactured goods and contemplating the purchase from Canada of complete plants. Throughout our discussions in this area, emphasis was lent by both sides on the mutual benefit to be gained from long-term commercial agreements.

Satisfying as were the discussions on trade and commercial relations, I was moved most by the several understandings reached in the areas of medicine and human relations. Honourable Members will be familiar with the important work done last spring in China by a joint governmental and professional medical mission to China led by Dr. Gustave Gingras, the then President of the Canadian Medical Association. That mission recognized the immense benefits that could be realized in health-care services in Canada if more were known about several areas of Chinese medical techniques. The hope was subsequently expressed by the two major medical bodies in Canada that the Canadian Government would attempt to encourage the Chinese to engage in co-operative activities with Canadian doctors to these ends.

I am delighted by the progress that we were able to make in this respect during my visit, which provides for teams of Canadian and Chinese physicians visiting one another's countries to study advanced techniques in each place. The field of interest chosen

by Canadian doctors in this first phase is that of acupuncture analgesia. I am informed that, if this technique proves as successful in the Canadian social environment as has been the case in China, its contributions in the elimination of anaesthetic complications, in the reduction of costs associated with surgery, and in the extension of surgery to elderly and high-risk patients now denied treatment, will rank it as one of the major contributions to Canadian medicine -- a ranking, I am assured by members of the medical profession, equivalent in importance to any medical contribution in the past decade.

I am particularly appreciative of the willingness of Premier Chou to agree to my request that facilities be instituted which will lead to the reunion of families. Just as I regarded this question of reunification as one of the most important of the subjects on which I engaged Premier Kosygin in discussion -- and which has since led to the exit from the Soviet Union of several hundreds of persons to join relatives in Canada -- so I emphasized to Premier Chou the importance with which Canadians as a whole viewed this aspect of Canadian-Chinese relations. I have instructed Canadian officials to waste no time in the implementation of this new understanding that permits Canadian immigration officers to proceed to China to process applicants for entry to Canada. An officer of the Department of Manpower and Immigration is already on his way from Ottawa to Peking.

Understandings were reached in other fields as well: cultural and sports exchanges, for one, consular arrangements for another, and science and technology for still another. The latter was made possible by the extensive work done in advance of my arrival by the Minister of State for Science and Technology.

My visit to China leaves me without any doubt of the wisdom of the decision of the Canadian Government to reverse the long-standing policy of ignoring the People's Republic of China. Because that immense country of talented and industrious people will have an increasing impact on world affairs, and because a strengthening and enriching of the bilateral relation between Canada and China can be beneficial to Canadians, that decision was right and will increasingly prove to be right. The presence of China in the United Nations and in other international councils makes it vital that Canada's interests and Canada's views be understood and, it is hoped, supported by the Chinese Government. It will be of increasing advantage to Canada that Canadian leaders have opportunities to explain Canadian attitudes and policies to Chinese decision-makers just as -- amongst many things -- I exposed to

Premier Chou the positions Canada would advocate at the forthcoming Law of the Sea Conference.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I was heartened again and again by the genuine friendship extended toward Canada and Canadians by the leaders and the people of modern China. I am confident that the diversification and enjoyment of our new ties with China will not interfere with the long-standing friendly relations that we enjoy with those several countries with whom we have special ties. Nor will it detract from our efforts to seek, to our advantage, the easing of tensions and the increase of contacts with other parts of the world.

It has not been the vastness of the Pacific that has acted as a barrier between Canada and China. The gulf has been found all too often in the minds of those of us who were unwilling to recognize the magnitude of one of the most significant revolutions in the history of the world and the extension of basic human amenities to hundreds of millions of persons to whom they had been denied for millennia.

The name of Canada is held in high respect in China, and, as a consequence, Canadians are beneficiaries. It is the aim of this Government that this reputation, and those benefits, increase and continue.