

ASIA COLLOQUIA PAPERS

Vol. 1 No. 1 // September 2011

Canada and China at 40

— With a Response by Professor Ruth Hayhoe

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In the 2010 Asia Lecture, Professor Frolic shared unique insights into the evolution of Canada-China relations focusing on the complex negotiations and diplomatic coup by which Canada established diplomatic ties with the People's Republic in autumn 1970. One of Canada's foremost China scholars, Frolic first visited China as a graduate student in 1965 and went on to become a Canadian diplomatic representative to the Communist state in the mid-1970s. Using first-hand experience, expert knowledge, and rare interview material, Frolic provided glimpses of how Canada's diplomatic ties with China came about despite Cold War tensions. As he explained with candour and simplicity, although the decision to formalize ties with China brought a chill to Canada's own relations with the United States for a time, it marked a coming of age for Canadian foreign policy: what became known as the Canadian Solution to the diplomatic quandary of the "One China" policy was eventually adopted by other countries. Frolic places the evolution of formal Canada-China relations in the context of milestones, from Norman Bethune to the controversial Canadian grain sales to China during its Great Famine, from the "missionary kids" who became Canada's first crop of diplomats to China to the deft handling of the "One China" issue that brought Canada to diplomatic centre stage. Prominent Canadian China scholar, Prof. Ruth Hayhoe, offered an equally insightful response.

In 1965, some 45 years ago, I went to China. I was a graduate student then in Moscow, doing research on Soviet communism. The Sino-Soviet split had escalated: every day the Russian and Chinese students in my dormitory at Moscow University were heatedly arguing with each other about socialism and revolution. After many months of living in the Soviet Union, I was looking to escape from the drab greyness of Soviet socialism. Could China offer the promise of a fresher brand of Marxism?

From the eleventh storey window of my room at the University I could see the big, stolid Chinese Embassy squatting on the horizon. So I went there one winter day to apply for a visa. We spoke in Russian. "Why do you want to go to China?" "Because I need to see for myself what is happening in your country." Or to be frank, China was a mysterious, exciting, exotic place to this young Canadian. Never mind the ideological squabbling. "Don't you know that our two countries do not recognize each other? We don't have diplomatic relations. Hardly any Canadians are allowed to go to China. Come back in two weeks and we will tell you if our government will grant you a visa."

Few Canadians had visited China after Mao and the Communists took power in 1949. We had no formal relations, and China was not a Canadian priority. Canada's main roots were in Europe and North America, not in the Pacific. Before World War II, the Pacific, then generally referred to as the Far East, was the terrain of a handful of Canadian missionaries and traders. We briefly permitted immigration to Canada from China and Japan, in the late nineteenth century, but in a final burst of racism after World War I banned any more "orientals" from entering Canada.

As Canada acquired more presence in international affairs in the twentieth century, we established small trade offices in Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong. In World War II China, then ruled by the KMT (Kuomintang), was our ally, one of the Big Five (United States, Soviet Union, France, Britain, China) fighting the Japanese. We supported what was then the legitimate government of China (Chiang Kai-shek) even as the KMT and the Communists were embroiled in a civil war that led to the defeat of the KMT. When the KMT government fell

in 1949 and fled to Taiwan, the KMT Ambassador remained in Ottawa, an accident of history and a political embarrassment to Canada. Canada never sent an ambassador to Taiwan.

We never had a diplomatic mission in Taiwan, unlike the Americans. When the Communists were about to assume power in 1949 the Canadian government made plans to recognize the new China. We acquired a building and had an officer waiting in place. But recognition never happened. The Cold War intervened; the Korean War broke out and we shied away from establishing relations with a country with which we were in ideological and armed conflict. In the 1950s and into the 1960s Canada tried several times to engage China. Each time, in 1955, 1958, and 1963, the initiative failed. Conventional wisdom is that American opposition to the recognition of the PRC (People's Republic of China) was the decisive factor.

In 1955 and again in 1958, Eisenhower allegedly threatened economic retaliation and American withdrawal from the U.N. if Canada went ahead. In 1963-64, Kennedy and then Johnson were becoming enmeshed in Vietnam. Better relations with China—a three-time enemy (the Chinese civil war in the 1940s, the Korean War in the 1950s, and finally Vietnam)—were not seen as an American policy option at that particular moment. In fact, while American opposition weighed heavily in the mind of Canadians, we should not place full blame the Americans for our hesitation. China wasn't that important to us. Canadian domestic politics played a key role. Quebec, which was significantly anti-communist in the 1950s, smarting from harsh Chinese treatment of Catholic nuns and missionaries, was opposed to recognition. No one among the dominant Liberal Party wanted to alienate Quebec voters who were staunchly Liberal; Canadian public opinion did not support improved relations with China until well into the 1960s.

Trudeau later speaks of "sleeping next to the American elephant—whose every twitch and grunt—affects Canada." The elephant metaphor has stuck with us over the years, certainly well into the late 1980s when we changed course and embraced free trade with the United States. Back in the 1950s and certainly in the 1960s, however, Canadian anti-Americanism rode high, in our criticism of the United States for its Vietnam policy, for American strategic policies, for its policies that

compromised Canadian sovereignty (placing nuclear warheads in Canadian missile sites), for its economic and cultural policies that would pose a threat to our exports and national identity, and, ironically, for mostly ignoring us.

By the mid 1960s when I first went to China, it was becoming fashionable for Canadians to view our China policy as a statement of independence from America. American China policy was mired in Cold War politics, at a time when the Sino-Soviet split was beginning to reshape the world order. In 1964 two important events occurred. China exploded a nuclear device and it established diplomatic relations with France. Suddenly the Americans would have to begin to rethink their hard policy of “isolation and containment” of China and accept the fact that France, a major Western country, had opted for a one-China policy, abandoning its relationship with Taiwan.

For 20 years the Americans had supported the KMT and Chiang Kai-shek, first as the government of China and then as the ruling party in Taiwan. Chiang and his wife were celebrated by America as great heroes, defenders of democracy and Free China, and solid opponents of communism. For those twenty years the Americans had made Taiwan’s survival a centre-piece of U.S. policy in Asia, and the Americans were not ready to sacrifice its ally, nor admit defeat.

Canada had only a lukewarm commitment to Taiwan. Aside from trade we had minimal ties—no official representation on the island, no pro-KMT lobby in Canada, unlike the American Committee of One Million that was embedded in the U.S. Congress. For many Canadians, myself included, Taiwan was an American issue requiring American and PRC solutions. We should remember that in the 1950s and 1960s, Taiwan was still a nasty authoritarian state with a small group of mainland-exiles suppressing the local Taiwanese majority population. Only in 1987 did it allow open political opposition. Only in the 1980s did its economy develop to the extent that it ranked in the world’s top dozen in terms of GDP (gross domestic product).

Why am I dwelling on Taiwan at this point? Because Canadian recognition of China in 1970 was hailed by us as an act of political emancipation from the Americans, and it was our decision to end formal relations with Taiwan that made

this possible. As Yu Zhan, Ambassador to Canada in the 1970s said to me, “Establishing diplomatic relations was all about Taiwan. We were patient with Canada. We were ready to wait 100 years or more to get agreement that there is only one China. Canada was flexible; we knew that the Americans were not. They were militarily tied to Taiwan by treaty and by their history.”

Our differing commitments to Taiwan are one part of the story, but there is more to be said. While the American official position into the mid-1960s was that China is “the enemy” and that communism was a threat to American hegemony, Canadians appeared to be more willing to look for ways to engage with China, not being saddled with the U.S. responsibility to lead the fight against communism. We fancied our role as “helpful fixer” and “mediator,” supported by a past history with China that was essentially benign, if not practically invisible. As Yu Zhan remarked, “You were not an imperialist power. You never occupied China. Never set up treaty ports. You built hospitals and schools for us—your Dr. Norman Bethune was celebrated by Chairman Mao for his selfless devotion to China.”

In 1965, when in China, I felt as a Canadian that we were on the cusp of engagement with China. In 1960, we had begun to sell China large quantities of wheat, the first country to do so in the midst of China’s Great Famine. Alvin Hamilton, then Minister in the Diefenbaker government, recalls how, “Two Chinese gentlemen arrived in Montréal with suitcases full of money to buy wheat. I directed them to Winnipeg, the offices of the Canadian Wheat Board. Then I had to persuade Cabinet to approve the deal... It was for over 100 million dollars.” In 1959 the *Globe and Mail* became the first North American newspaper to have an office in the PRC. The reportage was thin—our journalists were kept at arms length by their minders. After less than a year the first one, Frederick Nossal, was expelled. Nevertheless, we had a Canadian presence inside China. The *New York Times* did not and was forced to reprint its China coverage from the *Globe and Mail*.

And we had Norman Bethune. On the train to Beijing, when Chinese passengers heard I was Canadian they replied: “Bai Qiu En” (Bethune). Not knowing any Chinese then aside

from “Jia Na Da” (Canada), it took me two days to realize his importance to China. Chairman Mao had made this Canadian, warts and all, into a Chinese hero—“even though he was a foreigner, he helped China.” During the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s article on Bethune was read by hundreds of millions of Chinese. In the midst of Cold War ideological competition between East and West, a small spot had been reserved for Canada.

In a changing world in the mid-1960s, the groundwork was being laid for China’s “coming out” into the world and for Canada’s special role. Behind the scenes, Canada’s elite foreign policy establishment, the Department of External Affairs, had several times produced China policy reviews and summaries of possible Canadian scenarios, either to establish trade offices in China and Canada or to support China’s admission to the United Nations. The DEA contained a group of senior officials who were sympathetic to engaging China. The so-called “mish kids”—children of former missionary families in China—were a key part of this group: Chester Ronning, Ralph Collins, John Small, and Arthur Menzies. The latter three, born in China and Mandarin speaking, later served as the first three Canadian ambassadors to China from 1971 to 1980.

We had the professional diplomatic expertise, the mish kids, Norman Bethune, the wheat sales and a China beginning to look for new allies in the widening Sino-Soviet split. Also, Canadian public opinion had turned. A majority was now in favour of recognition. The Quiet Revolution in Quebec, plus France’s recognition of the PRC in 1964 had brought Quebec more in line with the rest of Canada. What was lacking was a catalyst to move us to the next level—direct negotiations with the PRC.

The arrival of Pierre Elliot Trudeau as new leader of the Liberal Party in 1968 was that catalyst. While his predecessor, Lester Pearson, had vacillated on China (“Better to have peace with Washington than relations with Peking”), Trudeau, as early as 1950, had advocated engagement with China. He had visited China in 1949 for several weeks, observing the Communist takeover. In 1960 he and four others travelled to China for three weeks, and he and Jacques Hebert produced the book *Deux Innocents en Chine Rouge* where they wrote:

Our conduct is doubly irrational: in politics we refuse to recognize the existence of those who rule a quarter—soon to be a third—of the human race; and we don't deign to sit with them in the councils of the nations; in economics we hesitate to increase our trading relations with the most formidable reservoir of consumption and production that ever existed.

In 1966, Trudeau chafed in frustration sitting in New York City as a member of the Canadian delegation that was supporting the admission of China to the United Nations in the face of strong American opposition. Canadian efforts were defeated by the Americans, and Trudeau later said in a conversation with me, "I saw then that recognition was the only way—and enough Canadians were ready to support that position." In 1968 Trudeau as new leader of the Liberal Party announced that,

Canada had tended to overlook the reality that Canada is a Pacific country—we have long advocated a positive approach to mainland China and its inclusion in the world community—we have an economic interest in trade with China and a political interest in preventing tension between China and its neighbours (and) especially between China and the United States.

Our aim will be to recognize the PRC government as soon as possible and to enable that government to occupy the seat of China in the UN, taking into account there is a separate government in Taiwan.

What exactly were Canada's goals as it sought to engage China? Was trade the main factor? We already had a thriving wheat trade and the Canadian Wheat Board was nervous that the political negotiations might upset these arrangements. Trudeau in conversation said that trade was not his main goal; rather it was to end China's isolation and "bring it into the world community." Some saw the Canadian initiative as an act of independence against American tutelage. We no longer felt longer constrained by American policy and threats of retali-

ation. For others it was a chance to produce a foreign policy achievement that would once again impress the world. As Mitchell Sharp, the Canadian Foreign Minister later said, “It is not often that Canada leads the world. Our recognition led a procession of some thirty other countries which very shortly thereafter, followed our example—employing what came to be known as the Canadian Formula.”

Were the Chinese ready to negotiate? It was 1968 and the Cultural Revolution was in full swing. China seemed to be focussed inward on its political struggles. Soviet troops were massing on China’s borders. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was responsible for conducting foreign relations, was under Red Guard attack. Zhou Enlai himself was vulnerable. China had withdrawn all its ambassadors from their foreign postings, save one. So was China likely to reply? And if not, would Canada “lose face?” In fact, there was an eight-month delay before China officially signalled its willingness to meet. Trudeau said later, “Some people thought we were taking a risk. What would happen if the Chinese just ignored us? I counselled patience—time was on our side.”

The story of the Stockholm negotiations, which lasted 20 months and ended successfully, is a long one—too long for today’s talk. Perhaps it will be the subject of another lecture later this year. Today I can only mention some of the highlights, the main issues, based on the extensive DEA files (now deposited in York Archives and in the National Archives in Ottawa), as well as interviews with the five key members of the Canadian negotiating team and the head of the Chinese negotiating team in Beijing.

What could we expect from the Chinese negotiators? China in 1968 was wracked with violence and killing. It had violated diplomatic protocol, endangering the safety of foreign diplomats and residents. When I was in China in 1965, the Canadian government asked me to report to the British Embassy. Britain then represented our interests in China. I was treated to a fine meal by the *charge d’affaires* in a room filled with the most beautiful Chinese porcelains, bronzes, and silks. Two years later, Red Guards stormed the British compound, destroying or looting what was inside, burning the building to the ground. The *Globe and Mail* correspondent, David Oancia,

recalled being outside the British Embassy at the time.

For almost 45 minutes they pummelled the car and shouted anti-Soviet and anti-imperialist slogans at us. Then a new group arrived and with clubs and bars they began to pound the car. They smashed the windshield, the rear window, bashed in the roof and dented the luggage compartment and engine covers.... Then they began to spit at us.

Would this type of behaviour—ideological confrontation and anti-foreignism—infect the negotiations? The Americans and Chinese had been holding talks in Warsaw since the mid 1950s to resolve Korean War issues. After over 130 meetings the Warsaw talks had produced sterile outcomes, each side reading prepared statements and holding to fixed ideological positions. Was this a scenario-in-waiting for the Canadians? In the subsequent meetings in Stockholm, however, much to our surprise, the Chinese side fully observed the norms and practices of conventional diplomacy. Chairman Mao's name was only mentioned once during the entire 20 months. The Chinese side, according to the chief Canadian negotiator, "conducted itself in full accordance with standard international negotiating procedure."

The Canadians expected the Chinese to hold back, not to reveal their position until the Canadians had spoken. From what we knew about Chinese negotiating practice at the time, we had this notion of Chinese inscrutability overlaid with Maoist ideology. To our surprise the Chinese took the initiative by immediately presenting its three "constant negotiating principles":

1. A government seeking relations with China must recognize the Central People's Government as the sole and lawful government of the Chinese people;
2. A government which wishes to have relations with China must recognize that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory and, in accordance with this principle, must sever all kinds of relationships with

the “Chiang Kai-shek gang;”

3. A government seeking relations with China must give support to the restoration of the rightful place and legitimate rights in the United Nations of the PRC, and no longer give any backing to so-called representatives of Chiang Kai-shek in any organ of this international body.

They set the agenda, and Canada, which wanted first to deal with “practicalities” (trade agreements, consular matters, claims settlements, protection of foreign nationals, etc.) had to abandon that strategy and confront the only real issue: whether we were ready to derecognize Taiwan and agree that it was part of the PRC. For the remainder of the negotiations Taiwan was always the focus. The rest was shadow play. Resolution of “practical” issues had to wait until after recognition, to be settled in the period up to and including Trudeau’s visit three years later in October 1973.

Yao Guang, chief of the MFA negotiating team, said later in conversation, “We proceeded cautiously with Canada at the beginning. We had to be sure that Canada was acting on its own and not as a surrogate for the Americans. By the summer of 1969, your Foreign Minister, Mr. Sharp, had made it clear in a speech in the Canadian Parliament that there could be some movement on the Taiwan issue.”

What about the American reaction to our intention to establish diplomatic relations with China? While officially the American position was to continue to have nothing to do with China, in fact, by the later 1960s, the mood in America was changing. In view of the widening split between China and the Soviet Union, some felt it was time for America to take advantage of the opportunity to play the “China Card.” In 1967, the arch anti-communist, Richard Nixon, published an article in *Foreign Affairs* suggesting it was time to review U.S. China policy. In the spring of 1968 after the Tet Offensive, it was apparent that the Americans and Chinese would not be confronting each other militarily in Vietnam. The policy of “isolation and containment” had shifted to “containment” only, in the minds of informed Americans, if not quite in official policy.

The Canadian initiative provoked the inevitable American angry reactions. The columnist Joseph Alsop complained that Canada “was crawling on its belly” to China. Dean Rusk, the ultimate Cold War hawk, had constantly been reminding the Department that Canada must not sacrifice Taiwan. The Canadian Deputy Minister, Ed Ritchie, told his U.S. interlocutors that, “We received 28 thousand letters concerning baby seals but less than 500 on China. It just isn’t a controversial issue for Canada.” As the talks proceeded, we kept the Americans and a dozen other countries informed of their progress. The American officials if not the pro-Taiwan, anti-“Red China” American media and other similar constituencies, backed off in their formal criticism. They were watching us carefully, however, to see how we would deal with Taiwan.

It was no problem for the Canadians to agree that the PRC was the legal government of China. It was in full control of the mainland territory. The Chinese side had tried to substitute “the Chinese people” for “China,” but the Canadians were not fooled and that attempt failed. We agreed to support China’s admission to the United Nations. We had sought this earlier and been rebuffed by the Americans. Now China’s admission to the U.N. was just a matter of time. But how to resolve the Taiwan issue, since Trudeau had stated that Canada had to “take into account that there is a separate government in Taiwan”? While we refused to agree that Taiwan was “an inalienable part” of China (“We don’t ask China to agree that the Arctic is a part of Canada”), we did finally “derecognize” the Taiwan government. The key language was that we “neither challenge nor endorse” China’s claim, but we do “take note” of that claim. “Take note” was the ice-breaker. It took almost 15 months to find this phrase, and at least four Canadians involved in the negotiations later took (modest) personal credit for its discovery.

In the House of Commons in the summer of 1970, Mr. Sharp was asked if we would be withdrawing recognition from Taiwan:

MR. SHARP: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have made it quite clear on a number of occasions that we have a one-China policy now. We will have a one-China policy in the

future.

MR. LAMBERT (Edmonton West): You used to have a two-China policy.

MR. PAUL YEWCHUK (Athabasca): Does this mean that Canada will be asking the Taiwan Ambassador to withdraw from Canada and has he been informed of this clearly?

MR. SHARP: Since we have a one-China policy we will recognize one government of China and will not recognize two.

By the fall of 1970 the two sides had reached agreement on the following statement:

The Chinese Government reaffirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC. The Canadian Government takes note of this position of the Chinese Government.

The Canadian Government recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China.

The October 13 announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations was eclipsed in Canada by the War Measures Act implemented on the very same day. In the anti-climax following the end of the China negotiations, the Taiwanese Ambassador was given a farewell lunch and quietly left the country. The Canadian Government moved swiftly to send a team to Beijing to open the new mission. Ralph Collins, who had supervised the negotiations, was appointed the first Canadian Ambassador, and he quickly began to brush up on his nearly forgotten Chinese. The Chinese side appointed a senior official, Huang Hua, to be Ambassador in Ottawa. When the Chinese team arrived in Ottawa to take over the Chinese Embassy premises, they discovered that the building had been sold by the Taiwanese a year earlier. Initially, both sides had to

start their missions in high rise apartment buildings, waiting to move into proper premises.

In 1990, I wrote, “For Canada these negotiations were a substantial diplomatic coup. The government had pursued a difficult policy without managing to alienate Canada’s American neighbour, even though the American administration was officially opposed. Canada had occupied the centre stage of world diplomacy for almost two years, showing off a newly independent foreign policy, excellent diplomatic skills, and the potential to be more than just a middle power—recognition was good for Canada and for Trudeau, the catalyst. At the time, it stood out as a Canadian success story and deserves to be recorded in history in those terms.”

Today, in retrospect, I might be a bit less effusive in my praise of what we accomplished in 1970. Were we “out negotiated” by the Chinese in our desire to make a deal? We gave up Taiwan, and the Chinese controlled the agenda for the talks. Could we have held out for more? The Americans later on did not have to sacrifice Taiwan, and in any case, the Canadian achievement was immediately blunted by a parade of other countries that established relations with China after 1970 using the Canadian “one-China” formula. While Canada thought it was stealing a march on the Americans, the latter launched their own “secret” initiative that would lead to Kissinger’s visit to Beijing in July 1971 and Nixon’s the following year. We had a brief moment in the sun, but then it was over, and we were only one of many foreign petitioners at the court of Chinese Marxism.

At the time, Canadian enthusiasm for what we had done was substantial. This was reinforced by Trudeau’s visit in 1973 when “practicalities” were settled and the two countries talked of a special relationship based on the continuing wheat sales, Norman Bethune, and Trudeau. When Trudeau met Zhou Enlai in Beijing, Zhou said that China owed Canada a debt of gratitude:

Canada was the first country that granted us recognition in 1970. It pushed a series of Western European countries into taking a similar step. Your support of

China in voting for our admission to the United Nations in 1971 also brought similar results. You sold us wheat when others would not.

Trudeau observed that 13 years earlier, in 1960, “I sat in this Great Hall of the People thinking that some day we would recognize this great nation. I saw at a distance and with admiration the leaders of China—for me it is a great pleasure now to be together with so many of you.”

Zhou pointed out that he never signed bilateral trade agreements, but since Trudeau had requested one he would sign. Zhou commented that because of Canada’s large wheat sales to China the PRC had developed a big trade deficit with Canada. We were not buying enough textiles from China. Zhou said this was China’s fault, not Canada’s:

We have to learn to work harder to sell you our goods. We need to improve the quality of our exports and sell at lower prices to win markets abroad. For example, we need to learn how to compete with Taiwan’s textile exports.

Not exactly following in Trudeau’s footsteps, I was sent to Beijing in 1974 to serve as First Secretary in our Embassy. It was a difficult time. The Cultural Revolution dominated daily life, and Zhou Enlai was under attack. Foreigners were tightly controlled. Our movements were restricted, and we were always being watched. I later wrote that our life in Beijing was like “cicadas living in a golden cage.” China was struggling to deal with its internal political demons and had little time to open up to Canadians. Still, now we had over 20 Canadian exchange students in Beijing universities, acquiring language skills and China expertise. Many of this group later on made their mark as top China scholars, diplomats, and in other China-related professions.

Most of my time was spent negotiating exchanges in culture, education, medicine, science and technology, and sport. The care and feeding of these countless delegations meant repeated trips back and forth from airports and the ar-

ranging of formal banquets. Sport quickly became a headache, however. Montréal was the site for the 1976 Olympics, and the PRC wanted to make sure Taiwan—then calling itself the Republic of China (ROC)—would not participate in the Olympics as “China.” I was regularly summoned by the All-China Sports Federation to be given a lecture reminding Canada that it had to adhere to our “one-China” policy and prevent Taiwan from coming to Montréal. Taiwan refused to give up the name ROC. The matter eventually wound up on the desk of Prime Minister Trudeau, who did not yield to the American pressure to let Taiwan attend. It was an awkward, unpopular decision, even though it reinforced our “one-China” policy. As it turned out, Taiwan refused to come, and the PRC was not ready to send a team. In 1984 both China and Taiwan participated in the Los Angeles Olympics, with Taiwan called “China—Taipei.”

In 1976 both Zhou and Mao died. An era was drawing to a close. Deng Xiaoping, who had joined Trudeau during his visit, announced that China would “open up” and that Chinese should be encouraged to *xia hai*—jump into the sea of markets and foreigners. By the mid 1980s a new China was emerging, one that had given up class struggle, had abandoned collectivized agriculture, was actively soliciting foreign investment and technology, and promoting entrepreneurship and free market principles.

Foreigners remembering the China of the 1970s at first were wary of this sudden turn in direction. While Deng spoke for a new, less ideological kind of China (“It does not matter if the cat is black or white as long as it catches mice.”) his opponents within the Party resisted these changes. The struggle between reformers and these “hardliners” would persist throughout the 1980s, lending a measure of uncertainty to the long-term stability of the post-Mao reforms. Could China succeed in so abruptly changing course? Could it be trusted to take on a responsible role in conventional international institutions? The split between China and the Soviet Union had produced an emerging multipolar world. The Cold War was winding down and China was searching for a place for itself in this changing world order.

For Canadian business this heralded new trading opportunities. For academics and those engaged in people-to-

people links, it was opening doors that had been basically shut since 1949. Thus, I was invited to give a series of lectures in 1982 at Beijing University (Beida), a campus where I had been denied access for a large part of the 1970s. Now one could pass through the gates and talk directly with Chinese scholars, exchanging ideas with them, even have Beida publish what I had said. For those waiting in the wings for communism to “humanize” itself, if not actually to “democratize,” this modest embrace with capitalism and the outside world was a first step in the inevitable “peaceful evolution” of Chinese communism to a more open political system.

The Canadian government hoped to expand the bilateral relationship to take advantage of these changes. The main target was trade, whose growth had not quite measured up to expectations. It was difficult to crack the China market. Canada now faced an imposing array of competitors. China moved cautiously as it embraced foreign trade. Canadian companies found it much easier to look south to US markets than westwards to China. When Brian Mulroney and the Conservatives took power in 1984 they focussed on trade expansion and on developing a strategy designed to maximize opportunities for Canadian business in China through high-level visits, concessional financing, development assistance, regular government-to-government political and economic consultations, and people-to-people links. Mulroney had visited China as a private citizen in 1979, and the contrast for him, seven years later, was palpable:

I was struck by the tremendous changes in the last six or seven years, tremendous progress that we can see visibly on the streets. There is a greater sense of well being, shared by the Chinese population.... As Chairman Deng said the other day, the Chinese are trying to be realistic. They have an enormous problem, unique in the world, in terms of inherent difficulties that arise because of [the size] of the population itself.

China policy under the Conservatives was one of continuity rather than change. The exception was human rights. The Party contained within its ranks an anti-communist group

that supported Taiwanese autonomy, was suspicious of China and, unlike the Liberals, publicly criticized Chinese human rights practices. When Mulroney met with Zhao Ziyang in 1986, he openly criticized China for its human rights practices: “My farewell meeting with Premier Zhao was entirely devoted to human rights—even though I did recognize the traditional Chinese position that this was an internal matter, I didn’t raise it in a spirit of hostility. I raised it as the kind of subject that can be discussed between friends...”

Nearing the end of the decade the bilateral relationship seemed solid. It was still possible to talk of a “special relationship,” although many other countries now also had their own “special” relationships with China. Our links had expanded—at the people-to-people level, in the field of culture, education and development assistance. The latter, the CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) China programme set up in 1982, focussed on human resources, and we were training large numbers of Chinese in agriculture, management, forestry and other areas. With our self-proclaimed mission to “bring China into the community of nations” we had helped China gain membership in the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and were assisting China’s entry into the GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). The flow of high-level ministerial visits was at a peak.

Then it came crashing down with the events of June 4, 1989 in Tiananmen Square. The regime had used tanks against its own citizens, and the whole thing, including images of killing, was televised. Western governments reacted with outrage, and Canada was one of the strongest critics. Joe Clark, the Foreign Minister, announced that Canada would suspend high-level visits, freeze or cancel some CIDA projects, re-evaluate Canadian support for celebratory visits, assist Chinese students stranded in Canada, and suspend participation in the Three Gorges Project. The Chinese government did not apologize for its actions and told Canada that this was an internal matter.

I recall writing at the time that our “special relationship” was over. The tanks had done that. We thought China was something else than it turned out to be. The leaders had defied the *zeitgeist* of the times, which was the collapse of au-

thoritarian rule in the communist world. We had hoped China was about to democratize, but this was a Western dream that ignored the realities of governing China. Tiananmen redrew the map of Canada-PRC relations, providing a dose of reality that was disturbing to many Canadians. We learned in the aftermath of June 4 that we had no influence over China's leaders. Relations at the highest level—carefully nurtured for 20 years—proved to be broken reeds. There would be no dialogue on Tiananmen. June 4 also expanded the Canadian China policy community from a small elite of bureaucrats, academics, and politicians into a much larger network that now also included media, human rights advocates, and members of Canada's Chinese communities, ready to criticize China repeatedly for what it had done and what it would be doing in the future.

The post-Tiananmen focus was on human rights abuses, and this would affect the relationship well into the 1990s, until Prime Minister Chretien and the Liberals returned to power and made trade once again the primary official objective in the relationship. The Team Canada visit in 1994 was an extraordinary event bringing to China over 400 Canadian business representatives, the Prime Minister, two senior federal ministers, nine provincial premiers, and the northern territorial leaders. 1700 Canadians and Chinese attended a mammoth banquet in the Great Hall of the People. They signed contracts and memoranda of understanding in the amount of CDN\$8.5 billion, including a commitment to the sale of two CANDU nuclear reactors. The dollar amount of the deals made or committed was almost 50 per cent greater than the entire two-way trade between the two countries in 1994. It was the most productive trade mission in Canada's history and up to then the largest foreign trade mission ever hosted by China.

The Team Canada concept was not universally applauded by Canadians. The *Globe and Mail* wrote that Canada, "Managed to excuse the Chinese government's unfortunate habit of torturing and murdering dissidents to underwrite its nuclear ambitions with two new CANDU reactors and to implicate this country in a colossal environmental disaster in the making, the Three Gorges Dam." Chretien, under attack for promoting trade while neglecting human rights, reminded

his critics, "Be realistic. I'm the Prime Minister of a country of 28 million people. [China has] 1.2 billion people. I'm not supposed to tell the premier of Saskatchewan what to do. Am I supposed to tell the President of China what to do?"

In the post-Tiananmen period we repaired the bilateral relationship, restoring high-level visits, the CIDA programmes, and other official contacts. The flow of people between the two countries rose substantially, in good part due to a spike in immigration to Canada from Chinese living in Hong Kong worried about the impending retrocession of Hong Kong in 1997. China had recovered its poise. Deng Xiaoping in 1992 reinforced China's commitment to market reform, and the PRC continued along its course of rapid double-digit economic growth. A more realistic appraisal of China would now have to include not just acceptance of its existence as an authoritarian state that brooked no foreign criticism, but also as an economic force to be reckoned with in the emerging post-communist "new" world order.

In 1996 the two countries established the Canada-China Human Rights Dialogue, an annual meeting of top government representatives from both sides to discuss human rights issues. For the next nine years these meetings continued until they were suspended in 2005. At the outset the Dialogue was seen as a promising vehicle to engage China on a controversial topic, but it degenerated into a sterile exchange. Other Western countries were trying the same approach and were similarly disappointed, for example, the Americans, who subsequently also suspended their dialogue.

When Chretien left office in 2003, on the surface the restored relationship seemed solid once again. Yet the post-Tiananmen period had not resolved the human rights agenda, and a part of the basic bilateral fabric was fraying. Despite our efforts to increase trade, we had fallen further behind our competitors. In the 1970s we once ranked as No. 4 of China's trade partners. Now we were a fading No. 14. We were running a 5 to 1 deficit in our trade balance, whereas as late as 1990 we still had a surplus. Chinese trade protectionism, dumping, and intellectual property rights violations remained significant obstacles.

More and more it appeared we were becoming "a

hewer of wood and a drawer of water” for China’s burgeoning economy. The CIDA programme was delivering high-quality development assistance to China, but China’s per capita GDP was reaching the point where it shortly could no longer qualify for CIDA funding. Consular matters needed attention. China refused to recognize dual citizenship, and we needed China’s help in preventing Chinese from seeking refuge in Canada to avoid criminal prosecution in China.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, Canada had helped China gain entry in international institutions, ending its political and economic isolation. After Tiananmen we realized that our presumed influence over China’s leaders had been exaggerated. At the turn of the millennium it was apparent that China had become a world power, and Canada was no longer one of China’s favoured partners. The balance had shifted, and we needed to rethink the relationship, even as Canada was beginning to lose its place as a major player in world affairs.

Now tightly tied to a continental economic and political agenda, we had become an American follower for the better part of our foreign affairs. Canada-China policy was basically walking in the footsteps of American-China policy. We no longer were trying to be in advance of the Americans or seeking to show our independence from them. Once the American and Chinese had “normalized” their relations in the late 1970s our “China advantage” had essentially ended. For the future, Sino-American relations would serve as a benchmark for Western China policy. Consciously and unconsciously, we took our cues from that relationship because it is America that most mattered to the Chinese. After the collapse of the Soviet Union that would become the defining relationship in international affairs.

When Prime Minister Harper took office in 2005, the official China relationship fell on hard times. Harper, for ideological and domestic political reasons, had no interest in conducting “normal” relations with China along the lines of his predecessors, both Liberal and Conservative. His main focus was human rights, and he pursued this with a vengeance, bestowing honorary citizenship on the Dalai Lama, criticizing Chinese treatment of minority groups, and announcing to those in the business community who complained, that the

projection of Canadian values was “more important than the pursuit of the Almighty Dollar.” High-level visits ceased and official relations froze in place. The bilateral relationship, already in need of repair, was allowed further to deteriorate.

In effect, we were officially ignoring, if not demonizing China. At the people-to-people level the links continued, but those of us working in those areas felt we were squandering the huge investment we had made in China over 40 years, that surely there were better ways to “project Canadian values” and maintain appropriate relations with one of the world’s future great powers.

Ultimately, high-level visits slowly resumed, public government attacks on China’s human rights practices disappeared, and in December 2010 the Prime Minister made an obligatory visit to China where the two sides agreed to move forward. Some of us who have been involved with China are sceptical whether we can overcome the damage that has been caused to the relationship. To be sure, when we have had success with China it has been our Prime Ministers—Trudeau, Mulroney, and Chretien—who have taken the lead, but it is unlikely that this will happen today. Harper does not appear to be interested in China, and this writer cannot visualize him as someone who intends to be the architect of a revitalized China relationship. It will be up to the rest of us to step up and continue what we began so courageously 40 years ago.

To conclude this talk, I need first to apologize for trying to cover so much ground in one lecture. Perhaps I lingered too long over the foreplay and did not pay enough attention to the consummation of the relationship after 1970. I felt, however, if we wanted to understand what happened after 1970 that it was important to recall precisely how and why we wanted to establish relations in the first place. In the recent period, as we are re-examining our China policy, it can only be helpful to have a clearer portrait of how we got there. I hope that this talk has done that.

In my view, the construction of the bilateral relationship has been an impressive achievement. In the early years we were in uncharted territory waiting for China to emerge from its ideological shell. We were pioneers in developing new programmes to open up China and make the most of Canada’s

limited resources for foreign relations. The CIDA programme which we began in the early 1980s was an important innovation, not just for training Chinese, but also for its “soft” human rights programmes exposing Party officials, legislators, judges and lawyers to Western democratic practices. The decision to establish a Sinologist position, recruited from the community of Canadian China scholars and posted in Beijing, was a unique experiment. Thirteen of us served in the Embassy between 1973 and 2001, and several may be here today in this room.

The family reunification programme established in 1973 brought large numbers of Chinese to Canada in the following years to reunite with their families. It was the first of its kind with a Western country. We were also among the first Western countries to offer permanent resident status to Chinese students stranded abroad after Tiananmen. Our Scholarly Exchange Programme, among the very first, recently celebrated its 37th year of operation and has trained some of our top diplomats and scholars on both sides. The Team Canada visit in its time was an innovative attempt to open up trade and was later copied by other countries. In the mid-1980s we resolved a significant part of our Taiwan problem by setting up an arm’s length NGO in Taipei administered by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to represent our growing economic and cultural links with Taiwan.

Could we have done better? In hindsight it is always easy to offer criticism. We did meet our goals of helping to bring China into the world community. Our two-way trade with China has increased 25 times since 1970, and our people-to-people links are strong, especially with 1.2 million Canadians of Chinese origin now living in Canada. As I noted above, however, we are lagging behind in the China game, losing out to other countries in expansion of trade. In the human rights area, we have stumbled and are now trying to find our way. We are no longer as important to China as we once were or thought we were, and we need to accept the reality of dealing with China as a major authoritarian world power in the longer term. What new challenges and opportunities will await us then in the next 40 years?

EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS: A RETROSPECTIVE IN RESPONSE TO B. MICHAEL FROLIC

— By Professor Ruth Hayhoe

It was my honor to make some comments on Bernie Frolic’s magisterial overview of 40 years of diplomatic relations between China and Canada presented at the York Centre for Asian Research on September 21, 2010. I was deeply impressed by his memories of the view from Moscow in 1965, his personal observations of Trudeau’s approach to China, his reflections on the role of Canadian “missionary kids” in building the relationship, and also the importance of the Norman Bethune legacy. The discussion of the significance of the Canadian decision to sell wheat to China at the time of famine was also very perceptive, reminding us of how courageous a political decision it was at the time. My own memory of that period was of being cruelly taunted by American cousins in Michigan, when I was visiting an aunt there, because “Canada was selling wheat to red China.” I had barely heard of China and had no idea why it was “red”, but my American cousins had clearly been well educated on the topic in their schools!

In these brief remarks, which are presented in response to Bernie’s lecture, I focus on education, and particularly the educational events and initiatives I have been involved in while serving as cultural *attaché* in the Canadian embassy from 1989 to 1991, and subsequently in two major projects of collaboration between Canadian and Chinese universities, that ran from 1989 to 2001. The overarching question that frames my memories is one that also inspired a course on international academic relations that I am still teaching: Can universities be actors on the global stage irrespective of the political relationships between their countries?

Let me begin with some memories of two difficult years in Beijing, from July of 1989 to August of 1991. In December of 1988, I was initially approached by Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, on Bernie’s recommendation, to see if I would consider taking up the Sinologist post in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, a position he had pioneered in the early 1970s. My appointment was

confirmed in February of 1989, and I had the opportunity of doing research in Beijing and the North China region in April-May of that year under the sponsorship of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In the early days of the student movement, it was exciting to be living at People's University, visiting Tiananmen Square and even participating in a march of students and faculty at Inner Mongolia University in Hohhot, with the university vice-president also taking part. Those were the heady days before martial law was imposed in mid-May of that year. My return to Canada on May 28 meant that I missed the tragic denouement of the movement, only seeing it on television at home in Toronto. My orientation to the Embassy post in June was taken up with rescue efforts to ensure we got all Canadian students home from China. When I returned to China in late July to take up the diplomatic appointment, Beijing was somber and subdued, entirely different from the city I had experienced in April and May.

What many Canadians may not be aware of was that the Canadian government took a rather different approach than that of France, the United States, and other major European countries to their cultural relations with China over the difficult period that ensued. The French celebrated the heroes of Tiananmen with a parade of empty bicycles at their 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, putting all cultural cooperation with Beijing on hold as an expression of official protest. The Americans had no choice but to cancel programs such as Fulbright and the Peace Corps due to the sensitivity over the presence of such American media magnates as Dan Rather on Tiananmen Square at the height of the movement and over what Chinese authorities saw as the strong influence of the VOA (Voice of America) on protesting students. By contrast, the Canadian government decided to support and enhance cultural relations with China at a time when political and economic relations had nearly come to a standstill. Their position was that students, scholars, artists, and media personnel had suffered most from what had happened. Rather than punish them with isolation, we should keep our exchange programs active and extend them further, if possible. Thus, the Canadian Studies programme, offering five-week study tours to Canada for cultural and educational personnel, raised the number

of openings to 55 in the first year I was in Beijing, up from around 30 in the year before, while the Canada-China scholars exchange programme continued to offer 12 one-year study opportunities. We were mandated to develop “people-to-people relations,” and this was an extraordinary challenge in a country like China with a highly developed culture of officialdom!

I thought about it intensely as I made my way through the somber streets of Beijing that summer of 1989, and it soon became clear that the best way to handle this was to get out of Beijing and visit universities, provincial television and radio stations, and other cultural organizations around the country. Given that there was a complete halt in high-level visits from Canada to China—not a single cabinet minister or provincial premier visited in the two years of my tenure—the small embassy team was free from many of the usual diplomatic duties in Beijing, and it was possible to travel. I visited universities in all regions of the country, often taking along one or two local staff, holding receptions to get to know scholars interested in Canadian Studies, and increasing the number of Canadian Studies centres from about 12 to 21 over the two-year period. Large numbers of Canadian books were donated, small grants were given for projects of research or teaching related to Canada, and information was provided about short and longer term programmes for study in Canada. In addition to these visits to universities, we often made contact with provincial television and radio stations and helped to plan two Canadian television weeks. We also held small-scale film events with arrangements to show selected Canadian films.

Most important of all, these trips gave us opportunities to meet and talk with Chinese scholars, writers, artists, and film makers in all regions of the country and get a sense of how they were experiencing the post-Tiananmen crackdown. When a moment for quiet conversation in a confidential environment arose, I would sometimes ask how they felt about the policies of various Western governments towards China. The response was interesting and somehow typically Chinese:

We are glad that governments such as France have taken such a principled stance in suspending their cultural programmes as an expression of protest

against the Chinese government. Yet at the same time we are thankful Canada has taken the opposite approach and Canadian programmes and opportunities give us hope for the future, keeping us from the kinds of total isolation from the outside world that we suffered during the Cultural Revolution.

It was a soul searching and difficult time, but it was a time when I experienced in a very personal way the possibilities and warmth of interaction on a cultural and intellectual level during conditions of a near freeze in political relations. Canadians can be proud of all the people-to-people interactions that took place over those two years and the ways in which these sustained hope in a period when many despaired. Only after Deng Xiaoping made his celebrated Southern tour early in 1992 did it become evident that the door would soon open again and relations with the Western world gradually return to normal.¹

A second aspect of the educational relations between China and Canada had begun after Canada and China signed their first development cooperation agreement. From the beginning, there was a strong interest on the Chinese side for assistance in education, after the devastating effects of the Cultural Revolution, and especially in higher education. When a World Bank delegation had visited Shanghai in 1981 while I was working as a foreign expert at Fudan University, it was interesting to learn how they had offered loans for agricultural or industrial development, only to find that first on the Chinese priority list for loans was education. World Bank representatives responded that they might consider loans for basic education, and the Chinese replied that they needed loans for higher education, something the World Bank was doing very little of at that period of time. However, such was their eagerness to get China involved after its decades of isolation that a series of higher education loans was agreed upon. By the late 1980s, 188 universities in different regions of China had benefited from loans amounting to over U.S. \$1.1 billion, and covering the areas of basic sciences, agriculture, medicine, management, vocational education, and teacher training.²

As far as I know, Canada was the only Western country

that responded in a similar way to the World Bank and offered support to Chinese universities through a series of university linkage projects that emerged as part of Canada's overseas development programme soon after the signing of the agreement in 1983.³ Universities were seen as having much to contribute to the array of development projects launched by CIDA, whose operations in China were divided into six sectors: human resource development, agriculture, forestry, energy, transportation, and communications. The Canada-China Management Education Program (CCMEP, 1983-1990, 1991-1996), and the Canada-China University Linkage Program (CCULP, 1988-1995) were included within CIDA's human resource development sector. CCMEP linked 17 Canadian universities with eight Chinese Management/Business Schools, while CCULP paired 31 Canadian universities with Chinese counterparts in areas such as health, agriculture, education, and engineering. CCULP's purpose was to develop the institutional capacity of the participating Chinese universities so that they could better contribute to China's national and social development.⁴ Building on the successes and strengths of CCULP, the Canada-China Special University Linkage Consolidation Program (SULCP, 1996-2001) selected 11 projects out of the original 31 under CCULP and supported them for a second phase that reached out to involve 25 Canadian universities and more than 200 Chinese universities, teaching hospitals, schools, and governmental and non-governmental agencies. SULCP projects furthered China's efforts to improve health, basic education, agriculture, manufacturing, poverty reduction, and environmental protection.⁵ Additionally, there were significant projects in the community college sector of higher education. It has been estimated that about CDN\$ 250 million were expended in these and related activities, nearly one quarter of the World Bank loans to Chinese higher education over the same period.⁶

The combined span of CCMEP, CCULP and SULCP (1983-2001) coincided with a period of pivotal change in Chinese society. These university-based programmes, encompassing disciplines ranging from health to education, environment, management, minority area development, engineering, and agriculture, enabled Chinese universities to improve their capacity to respond to China's development needs. The projects

also had a significant impact on institutional development for the participating universities. The partnership modality created a large platform for Chinese universities to adapt Canadian models and approaches to the Chinese context, and draw upon leading areas of expertise in Canada that were valuable for China's development needs. These large-scale university partnerships also substantially raised the international status of Canadian universities and gave them the opportunity for significant experience in international development work and an enhanced awareness of the rapid pace of globalization, particularly in East Asia.

Canadians have tended to be low-key in their international development initiatives, and probably few people realise how many rich interactions occurred during these years of intensive cooperation in education and research between Chinese and Canadian universities. Nor has much effort been made to keep records of all the activities in graduate education, research and various forms of training over these years, given that Canada has no federal agency responsible for higher education, and CIDA has moved on to other regions and sectors in its development assistance. Nevertheless, I am convinced that this was a period of significant mutual learning among universities, scholars and students in the two countries. I know from my personal experience in overseeing two major projects of joint doctoral education and research, how many people have been enriched and have continued and extended their international collaborative network as a result. Among those who participated in our joint doctoral project, there are now two vice presidents, four deans of education and more than ten senior scholars serving in universities in various regions of China, as well as Canadian scholars who continue to be involved in projects such as schools for language immersion, research on higher education massification, and cross-cultural studies of feminist activism.

Many of these university linkage projects were launched shortly before the Tiananmen tragedy, and the fact that they remained active during the two years of political freeze remains a testament to the possibilities of educational and cultural diplomacy and the autonomy universities are able to exercise beyond their national borders.

END NOTES

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Professor Frolic presented his Asia Lecture on September 21, 2010 at York University in Toronto, Canada.

Please cite this paper as:

Frolic, B. (Bernie) Michael (2011). "Canada and China at 40" *Asia Colloquia Papers* 1 (1). Toronto: York Centre for Asian Research. Available at: www.yorku.ca/ycar. ISBN: 978-1-55014-566-3

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