

## Notes on the China Visit

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## NOTES ON THE CHINA VISIT

*by Governor Harry Hughes*

I am delighted to share with the readers of the *International Trade Law Journal* a few of my experiences and thoughts concerning my recent trip to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Shortly after my inauguration, I was informed by members of the Department of Economic and Community Development of Maryland's unsuccessful efforts towards having a trade mission to the PRC. Apparently, just about everyone was attempting to do the same thing and it was difficult to make the required contacts necessary to solicit an invitation from a Chinese ministry or trade organization.

In the spring of 1979, Dr. John Toll, President of the University of Maryland, brought to my attention the name of a provincial governor who desired to visit the United States. The State Department and the National Council for U.S.-China Trade advised us that this official, Wan Li, a comparatively young 62 years old, was known as a progressive, competent, and upcoming administrator. Prior to his position with Anhui Province he had been a Deputy Mayor of Beijing and Minister of the National Railroad system. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the period known as the Cultural Revolution, extremist elements took power, contact with foreigners was prohibited, the universities were closed and all liberal, progressive leaders were held suspect. Wan Li, as a result, suffered during this period. But with the removal of the Gang of Four and the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping, Wan Li again gained national prominence.

I wrote to Governor Wan Li in May of 1979 proposing an exchange of delegations with the intent of establishing a sister state relationship. Shortly thereafter, I received a reply enthusiastically accepting the invitation. The PRC Embassy officials were equally delighted and informed us that this was the first sister state proposal to be initiated between our two countries.

In September, Governor Wan Li and a delegation of eleven provincial officials arrived in Maryland. For nearly two weeks, they toured the State's chicken farms, hospitals, assembly lines, steel plants and historic sites. The most interesting phase of Wan Li's visit to Maryland for me, however, was the time spent in personal discussions with him. Despite our wide differences in culture, history, education and philosophy, I found it extremely engaging to speak with him regarding issues of government, administration, world peace and even personal interests and family.

My return visit in June, 1980, found Wan Li a Vice Premier in Beijing, with major responsibilities in economic development and agriculture. The unique relationship established between Wan Li and myself during the

September visit apparently was well-known throughout the Chinese bureaucracy. Accordingly, access to ministerial level officials provided both our business and public sector people with a unique opportunity. Under normal circumstances, personal discussions with such high-level policy and decision makers would have been absolutely impossible. George Bunting of Noxell, Gene Allen of Black and Decker, Charles Cole of First National, Henry Rosenberg of Crown Central, Rex Wheeler of Lavino Shipping, Secretary Roberson of Economic and Community Development, and Wayne Cawley, Secretary of Agriculture, all held discussions with various top level Chinese counterparts. In addition to being our host in Beijing, Vice Premier Wan Li arranged a meeting for the delegation with Senior Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. This was in apparent reciprocity for the visit arranged for him with Vice President Walter Mondale during Wan Li's visit to Maryland.

There is no denying that significant trade between the United States and China will take several years to develop. But each member of my delegation, both public and private, made significant progress toward his own objectives. Specifically, Dr. Toll reached agreements on faculty exchange with the China University of Science and Technology; First National established a correspondent banking relationship with the Bank of China; and the Rouse Company agreed to sponsor a community planner to work and live in Columbia. As a result of these initial agreements, Maryland is now better positioned to pursue trade and commercial activities with the PRC.

After five very active days in Beijing, the delegation traveled to Anhui Province, where we were greeted with unforgettable warmth and sincerity. Anhui Province, an area in central China five times the size of Maryland, has a population of approximately 50 million. It is primarily agriculturally oriented but has vast natural resources and light industry which are sure to have a significant impact on China's modernization effort.

It was apparent that much preparation and considerable expense went into planning for our arrival. At the airport in Hefei, the capital city, hundreds of school children, dressed in their traditional Chinese costumes, performed for us to the accompaniment of several folk bands. During our many visits to schools, communes, factories, and historic sites, the delegation's activities were covered by local television and radio stations. Live television coverage and nightly specials showed all of our activities. At every stop during these three days, hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of Chinese enthusiastically greeted us with the traditional "ni-hao" or hello. The new Governor of Anhui Province, a former National Minister of Finance, Zhang Jing Fu, was gracious and took daily interest in our activities.

In conclusion, the Chinese are resourceful, disciplined, and willing to adapt new policies in order to achieve economic progress and independence. During the two-week visit, I came to recognize the difference between

political theory and practice. Above all, the new Chinese leadership is comprised of practical administrators, and I am confident that their modernization program, although a long and difficult process, will ultimately be successful. If the Maryland experience contributes to greater understanding and appreciation of each other's needs and priorities, we will have made a significant contribution to normalization and, in our own small way, world peace.