

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT

at the opening of the Trade Week
for the People's Republic of China and the
European Community

30 March

Mr Vice-Premier
and Vice-Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is both a high honour and a great pleasure for me to open this exceptional week which brings together the People's Republic of China and the European Community.

Over and above the direct reasons for the Week being organized at this juncture - to which I shall return later - what I want to emphasize here is everything the event represents as a meeting of two ancient civilizations, a coming-together of two leading actors on the international scene, informed with a common resolve to develop their relations, both political and economic.

This is what I have in mind, Mr Vice-Premier and Vice-Ministers, in welcoming you and your impressive and distinguished delegation on behalf of the European Community. It is in this spirit that, through you, I greet the great people of China.

I should like to add that the number and quality of those representing the business world in the European Community who have responded to the Commission's invitation is for me a particular source of satisfaction. I see here a striking token that the People's Republic of China is a subject of many-sided interest for our citizens in general and our business leaders in particular.

I wish to thank you on behalf of the Commission for having agreed in coming here to share with our guests in this endeavour and for the valuable contribution you are making to tightening the links between the People's Republic of China and the European Community.

To be sure, this gathering today is not the first we have had. For a number of years now there has been fruitful and ever closer contact between the People's Republic of China and the European Community. The signing, nearly three years ago (on the 3rd of April 1978) of a commercial agreement to promote increased trade gave formal expression to our friendship. Still more recently (on the 18th of July 1979) our trade relations were enhanced by a textile agreement.

My predecessor, President Jenkins, and my colleague, Mr Haferkamp, were warmly received in the People's Republic of China, which demonstrates the continuity and importance of our relations as friends and business partners.

We should therefore seize the opportunity afforded us today and throughout this week to heighten our contacts so that we may come to know each other better and turn to account, in an atmosphere of mutual trust, the enormous economic potential that we represent for each other. Indeed, this Trade Week, which has been most carefully prepared by both sides, is designed to stimulate the development of our trade and our investments.

Naturally, we are well aware that these are hard times economically, and all the countries in the world feel the impact. We also know, on both sides, that the future is promising and that the six fields on which we have jointly decided to centre our attention over the next few days are ones where substantial progress can be made in our trade relations. This whole week we therefore have a unique opportunity to try to achieve this progress. And if because of the demands of economic adjustment it has not always proved possible to realize the hopes placed here or there in certain quarters in the past, we should not conclude that the principle of developing our trade relations has been jeopardized.

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The presence of some 500 of the most influential European traders, and that of the largest Chinese delegation yet to come to the European Community, provide, to my mind, objective confirmation of the persistence of a common resolve to develop trade between us, based on the fact that our economies are truly complementary.

For my part, by way of an introduction to your discussions, I wish to stress the serenity and determination with which its dialogue with the People's Republic of China will be pursued by the European Community. It is as well, with all the tension around us today, that everyone should know that the friendship and solidarity between the People's Republic of China and the European Community are among the surest instruments of peace and progress for all mankind. We share an equal and real concern for independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Removed from any desire for domination, our peoples intend to move resolutely forward towards a closer understanding.

The Chinese and Europeans have learnt from history, and they see it confirmed in everyday life, that there can be neither cooperation nor progress without respect for the personality of other peoples, of their customs and the rules they have adopted. They have also become aware during the course of recent history that for both of them development is not only a prerequisite for prosperity, it is also a safeguard for their security.

At the same time, a time when dialogue between industrialized countries and those wishing to equip themselves with a sound economy is becoming more extensive and comprehensive, the People's Republic of China and the European Community are opening the way, through the impetus they are giving their trade relations, for other international initiatives and offering an example of a type of relationship designed to promote mutually beneficial development.

Thus, it is clear to everyone that, apart from its short or medium-term economic results, the enterprise we are engaged in constitutes an eminently political goal in itself. This political goal, ladies and gentlemen, is in fact the surest, most fruitful long-term investment: it means peace and well-being for the greatest number. Therefore, in opening this trade week, I would express the hope that your labours will be crowned with success and that in your dealings you will find a way to combine the economic and political aspects of relations between the People's Republic of China and the European Community.