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Scientific and Technological Exchanges Between China and the United States

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On the eve of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, scientific exchanges and friendly contacts were made between members of the Scientific and Technical Association of the People's Republic of China (STAPRC) and members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Members of other Chinese and U.S. scientific and technological circles have also been contributing to the development of scholarly communications and friendly relations between the two countries.

To help the American people and U.S scientific and technological circles know more about STAPRC, I will give in this article a general account of the organization in an attempt to deepen our mutual understanding. STAPRC came into being in 1958 when the All-China Federation of Scientific Societies and the All-China Association for the Dissemination of Scientific and Technical Knowledge combined to form a single national organization embracing all science and technology groups under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

In July 1949, on the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government appointed Wu Yuzhang to be in charge of preparations for the National Conference of Natural Science Workers (known as the "Science Conference") with a view to developing science and technology in China in an organized way and to mobilizing scientists, engineers, and technical personnel to take part in the building of the new China. After a year of preparation, the first conference of science ever convened in China's history was held in Beijing (Peking) in 1950. During this conference, two organizations were founded, namely the All-China Federation of Scientific Societies and the All-China Association for the Dissemination of Scientific and Technical Knowledge. As leaders of the many scientific and technological groups throughout the country, the two organizations helped in the restoration of China's national economy and in the execution of the first Five-Year Plan by initiating scientific exchanges and organizing activities designed to popularize science.

The merging of the two scientific organizations in 1958 was proposed by the Chinese Communist party and our government as a means of better utilizing the efforts of our many scientists, engineers, and technical personnel in achieving ahead of schedule the Twelve-Year Plan mapped out in 1956 for science and technology. It was in this way that STAPRC came into being. Some well-known scientists participated in the early success of the organization. For example, Li Siguang (Lee Ssu-kwang) was elected chairman, and Hou Debang (Hou Teh-pang) and Zhu Kezhen (Chu Ko-chen) were elected vice chairmen of STAPRC. Peking was chosen as the seat of STAPRC. As Professor Li Siguang has passed away, I am now the acting chairman.

Since its founding, STAPRC, together with its subordinate societies, has regularly sponsored scientific and technological exchanges and has held, in various forms, academic meetings, symposia, and forums. Some of these were held for the purpose of pooling the achievements and experiences in particular fields of science; others were devoted to the exploration of specific topics. The academic discussions were conducted in accordance with the policy of "Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend," so that different views concerning the development of science could be freely exchanged and participants could make suggestions concerning the main target for scientific research in the years to come.

In the past few years, the work of STAPRC and its subordinate academic societies was seriously disrupted by the Gang of Four. The downfall of this group marked the beginning of a new period of development in China and ushered in the spring of science. STAPRC and its subordinate academic societies have resumed their work, and one of their major effects has been to increase the number of nationwide societies of natural science (such as the Chinese societies of mathematics, physics, agronomy, and medical sciences) to more than 70. Membership in these societies is rapidly increasing and publication of more than 90 scientific journals has been resumed. Positive efforts have been made to conduct scientific activities: 184 national scientific meetings were held in 1978 alone.

Dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge among the workers, peasants, and schoolchildren is an essential task of STAPRC, the aim being to raise the scientific and cultural level of the entire nation. Departments in charge of popularizing science have been instituted in both STAPRC and its subordinate scientific societies. In addition, such organizations as the Association for the Creation of Popular Science Writings and the Association of Science Films have been created for the purpose of mobilizing qualified popular science writers to extend the work of dissemination of science by using various kinds of popular science facilities. In both urban and rural areas, a variety of programs, including technical investigations and demonstration projects, has been organized in an effort to promote industrial and agricultural production. Key problems in pro-

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duction and construction at both the state and local levels are receiving attention from STAPRC and its associated scientific societies. A number of rational proposals have been made, some of which have received a great amount of attention; some of these have already been adopted by the government and the departments concerned. STAPRC has set up the Popular Science Publication House to compile and publish various popular science readings and will organize, step by step, various kinds of facilities for science-popularization activities, such as museums of science and technology, museums of natural history, and so on.

With regard to popularizing science among youths and children, STAPRC sponsors large-scale meetings and discussions between scientists on the one side and youths and teenagers on the other. Visits to scientific research institutions are organized, as well as contests in such fields as mathematics and physics, and science fairs designed to encourage creation and invention by young people. Last year, more than 200,000 middle school students took part in an eight-province-and-city mathematics contest. This contest produced 57 winners who were admitted directly into institutions of higher learning. STAPRC has also set up various organizations for young science enthusiasts and has sponsored a summer camp on aviation, science excursions, and other activities that have given an impetus to fostering the idea of "love science, study science, and use science" among the young people.

One of the important aspects of the activities of STAPRC and its subordinate academic societies is to strengthen the exchanges and contacts with the international scientific and technological circles. As early as the 1950's, Chairman Mao pointed out that we were rather backward in the natural sciences and that we should therefore make special efforts to learn from foreign countries. Scientists from 44 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania participated in a 1964 symposium in Peking, and the 1966 Peking physics colloquium played a very positive role in promoting friendship and scientific and technological exchanges between Chinese scientists and scientists in different countries.

Since the downfall of the Gang of Four, the intercourse between China and scientific and technical circles abroad has resumed. Under the guidance of STAPRC, societies of geology, architecture, pedology, automation, metrology, and welding have already become members of their corresponding international unions. The intercourse between the various kinds of nongovernmental organizations and the personal contacts between scientists constitute an important part of our international scientific and technological exchange activities. In the years to come, members of STAPRC will make positive efforts to develop contacts with their counterparts in other countries, so as to strengthen the friendship between the Chinese people and the people all over the world.

Soon after the issuance of the 1972 Shanghai Communique between the governments of China and the United States, STAPRC and the U.S. Committee on Scholarly Communications with the People's Republic of China exchanged more than 60 delegations and study groups (involving more than 700 individuals).

In the fall of 1975, I headed the STAPRC delegation visiting the United States. We were warmly received by our American host, the Committee on Scholarly Communications, and through the arrangements made by this committee we visited many universities and research institutions in nine cities and regions of the United States. While in Washington, the delegation was received by President Ford. This was a great honor not only for our delegation, but also for China's scientific and technological circles.

In October 1978, I led the Chinese Education Delegation in a successful visit to Washington, D.C., that had been arranged in part by STAPRC. During this visit we discussed the question of exchanging visiting scholars and graduate and university students during the 1978 to 1979 school year with U.S. representatives headed by Dr. Richard C. Atkinson, director of the National Science Foundation.

Last year, a delegation of the AAAS headed by Mr. Emilio Q. Daddario, then chairman of the Board of Directors, visited China. Representatives from scientific and technological circles in China were able to exchange ideas with the visiting delegation and to arrange meetings for them at several Chinese institutions of science and technology. This year, at the invitation of the AAAS, STAPRC has sent a delegation with STAPRC's vice chairman Pei Lisheng as its leader, to visit the United States to meet friends and scientists there. STAPRC and its subordinate scientific societies have already become an important force in China's scientific and technological undertakings. China is at a new stage of development and has decided to shift the emphasis of the work of the whole country to socialist modernization. Gearing its work to the needs of the new situation, STAPRC will play an important role in the work of modernizing science and technology in China and in enhancing the scientific and cultural levels of the whole nation.

The Chinese and American peoples are linked together by their common wish for good relations and friendship, the differences in the social systems of our two countries notwithstanding. The desire of people in both China and the United States to develop scientific exchanges and friendly intercourse for the benefit of both countries and for mankind as a whole serves as a bond linking us together. A rainbow linking the peoples of China and the United States has already spanned the Pacific Ocean. In the days to come, scientific and technological circles in both countries will contribute to the construction of the edifice of friendship between China and the United States.

We hope that the peoples of China and the United States will remain friends and that scientific and technological exchanges between the two countries will continue to flourish!