

China invited senior Rotary leaders to Beijing in 2000

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1 November 2015



In October 2000, the Government of the People's Republic of China (中華人民共和國) invited Rotary International President-elect "Rick" Richard D. King (金恩) and seven other Rotary leaders on an official visit to China. The letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部) officially invited the Rotary International (RI) delegation to visit China on 14-21 November 2000, *"in the spirit of developing close cooperation between the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China and Rotary International."* Taking his advantage as diplomat, Rotarian Christopher Bo Bramsen (白慕申), who was the Royal Danish Ambassador to China, Mongolia and North Korea, was instrumental in arranging the meeting and continued to play a critical role throughout the Rotary delegation's visit.

Early in that year, through advisors to Rick King, the then Beijing Fellowship Group (BFG) was asked if they could pave the way for a high-level RI visit to China in November. The BFG, which was affiliated to the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社), was a formal gathering of multi-national Rotarians working and living in Beijing until it was chartered later as Beijing Rotary Club (北京扶輪社) in 2005. The BFG was ready to do so, and agreed that Bramsen should head a small team to put forward some recommendations to this end. Bramsen gave the team the nickname "Rotary in China by King," in short "the RICK team". The RICK Team met with top officials from the Ministry of Civil Affairs (民政部). They then worked out a strategy which was approved by Rick King. The Team was then able to secure an invitation for an RI delegation to visit China, issued – not by some charity institution or organization, but by the Chinese Government itself. The invitation, approved by the State Council (國務院) and issued in October, was extended to President-elect Rick King as head of the delegation and to 7 other high-ranking RI leaders, including the (1) President-nominee Bhichai Rattakul (陳裕財); (2) Director Kenneth Collins; (3) General Secretary Edwin H. Futa (布田); (4-5) Past Directors Daniel Mooers and Edgar Hatcher Jr.; (6) Past District 5230 Governor Kenneth Boyd; and (7) Past District 3450 Governor Dom Vessigault (偉思高) (*Hong Kong Rotary Club*).

It took time to produce the invitation. But when it was finally there, it was a real breakthrough. Having heard the news that the next two RI Presidents were going to China, President 2000-2001 Frank Devlyn (戴甫靈) asked the BFG, if he could be added to the list of the Delegation. Through some complicated diplomatic manoeuvres, the RICK Team managed also to have President Frank included in the RI visit to China.

During the preparations and during the visit itself, the members of the Beijing Fellowship Group were happy to serve as a bridge between Evanston and Beijing. On both sides there were misconceptions and some distrust. It did take a good amount of diplomacy, based on BFG's experience in China, to clear a number of misconceptions and to explain to both sides how Rotary could gradually be integrated in China. On the agenda was the pending legislation on foreign NGO's in China, and how Rotary could get back into China on step-by-step basis.

At different occasions, members of the delegations met with a number of high level Chinese leaders, including Vice-Premier Li Lanqing (副總理李嵐清), State Councillor Ismail Amat (國務委員司馬義·艾買提), Vice-Minister of Civil Affairs, Li Baoku (民政部副部長李寶庫), Chairman of China Disabled Persons' Federation, Deng Pufang (中國殘疾人聯合會主席團主席鄧樸方) (eldest son of Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平), and Yan Mingfu, Chairman of China Charity Federation and former Vice-Minister of Civil Affairs (前民政部副部長/中華慈善總會會長閻明復).

State Councillor Amat summarized the importance of the visit when he said: **“Your visit will lead to an increased mutual understanding and will build the base for the future cooperation between Rotary and China”.**

As told by the history, the Rotary International visit turned out to be a great success. It differed from earlier Rotary visits in three ways:

- For the first time, the RI leadership was invited to pay an official visit to China by the Chinese Government, approved by the State Council.
- RI was represented by a very powerful delegation, led by three consecutive leaders, the incumbent President, the President-elect and the President-nominee.
- The purpose of the visit was not to go into details about concrete Rotary projects, but to discuss the possibilities of re-introducing Rotary as an organization in China, and to make contacts with the most important Chinese authorities and organizations in this regard.

The November visit offered an opportunity for RI and the authorities of the People's Republic of China to explore and discuss the future of Rotary on the mainland. Although no Rotary clubs have existed on the Chinese Mainland since 1952, Rotary enjoyed a rich history there, dating back to 1919 with the chartering of the Rotary Club of Shanghai (上海扶輪社). Up to 1951, there had been 33 clubs supervised by 3 districts in China. Though Rotary's expansion and activities were severely curtailed by the Imperial Japan's aggression to China in 1937 until 1945, Chinese clubs continued to provide community service such as supplying ambulances, medical equipment and clinics, school books, as well as significantly the launching of refugee aids and relief in cooperation with the International Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

During the years before the 2 Clubs were chartered both in Shanghai and Beijing respectively in 2005, Rotarians have continued to participate in the civic life of the country through projects supported by The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. In its effort to rid the country of polio, China was aided by grants from PolioPlus and PolioPlus Partners, and overseas Rotarians visited the country to participate in national immunization days. China was

certified polio-free in 1997. In addition, Rotary clubs and districts from other continents have sponsored a number of Helping Grants to address other specific needs there. In an effort to learn more about China and strengthen international ties, Ambassadorial Scholars and Group Study Exchange teams have visited the country, and Chinese teams and scholars have been sponsored and hosted by Rotary clubs in other countries.

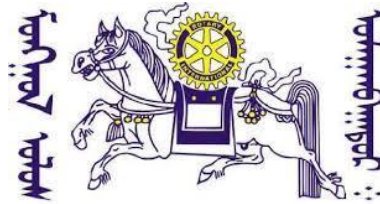


November 2000 in Beijing, R.I. Delegation leader President-Elect Richard D. King (right) was greeted by China State Councillor Ismail Amat



President Frank Devlyn met with Mr. Deng Pufang (right), Chairman of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, and eldest son of the late leader Premier Deng Xiaoping.

Extended Goodwill Visit to Mongolia



During the weekend after meeting with the Chinese officials in Beijing, escorted by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (*Charter President of the Tolo Harbour Rotary Club 吐露港扶輪社, Hong Kong*), RI President-elect Rick King, Lady Cheri King, General Secretary Edwin H. Futa, Ambassador Christopher Bo Bramsen (*Copenhagen Rotary Club, Denmark*), and District 3450 Governor John Wan (溫頌安) (*Kingspark Hong Kong Rotary Club 港京扶輪社*) traveled to Ulaanbaatar of Mongolia for 2 days of Goodwill Visit. In this capital city, they discussed Rotary's role in the region with the local Rotarians. There was, then, only one club in the entire country---the Rotary Club of Ulaanbaatar which was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Shatin (沙田扶輪社), Hong Kong, and was admitted to Rotary International on 10 January 1995. The Club was first non-districted until the entire country Mongolia was grouped into RI District 3450 on 1 July 2000. Since that day, the District 3450 was compiled with the landlocked country Mongolia and the 2 Chinese special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao.



November 2000 – Visit to herder's range in Ulaanbaatar, Herbert K. Lau (L1), Christopher Bo Bramsen (L2), Richard D. King (centre), Ulaanbaatar Rotary Club President L. Gombo (R2) and Edwin H. Futa (R1).



November 2000 – Visit to the Interact Club of the Music and Dance College of Mongolia, the King couple and R. I. General Secretary Edwin Futa were greeted by a mini concert performed by the students.



November 2000 – Rotary International President Elect Richard King, Mrs. Cheri King, and Herbert K. Lau were inside a Mongolian gher of which the outside was in deep snow.