

**CONFIDENTIAL**

HS

Please amend  
file title

PM Tours  
Abroad

10 March 1981

Possible visit by the Prime Minister to China

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 9 March. She agrees that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should take with the Chinese the line proposed in the final paragraph of your letter.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister  
 Agree that the Foreign  
 & Commonwealth Secretary may  
 speak as at 'A' below.

- Yes not

9 March 1981

Dear Michael,

Rmt 9/3

Possible Visit of the Prime Minister to China

When the Chinese Foreign Minister, Vice-Premier Huang Hua called on the Prime Minister on 2 October 1980 he reiterated the Chinese Government's invitation to her to visit China as soon as possible. The Prime Minister said that she was anxious to take up the invitation but that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would of course be visiting China first.

Lord Carrington will be calling on the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhao Ziyang, when he pays his postponed visit to China at the beginning of next month and the invitation to the Prime Minister is almost certain to be renewed. The Chinese will expect Lord Carrington to say something about the Prime Minister's intentions.

The situation in China now seems less settled than it appeared to be six months ago. The trials at the end of last year may have exacerbated internal tensions and the leadership have encountered severe problems in their efforts to modernise the economy. While Deng Xiaoping's position seems secure, he is rising 77. On the other hand, we have a very strong interest in maintaining good relations with China, particularly over Hong Kong. Lord Carrington's visit will keep up the momentum but, as I said in my letter of 16 September, no British Prime Minister in office has ever been to Peking and the Chinese will think it odd if we do not repair the omission before too long.

A. | In these circumstances, Lord Carrington hopes that the Prime Minister will be prepared to visit China some time in 1982, preferably in the first half of the year. But he sees no need to take a definite decision about the timing now. Subject to Mrs Thatcher's views, he would like to tell the Chinese that the Prime Minister remains anxious to take up her invitation; that her other commitments, particularly the Presidency in the second half of the year will unfortunately prevent her from doing so in 1981; but that she very much hopes she will be able to visit China next year. If this seems agreeable to the Chinese, Lord Carrington would go on to suggest that dates might be discussed nearer the time, perhaps in the autumn of this year.

yours ever  
 Roderic Lyne

-9 MAR 1981

