



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

24 October 1979

Dear Michael,

PREMIER HUA'S VISIT: POSSIBLE INVITATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER

During his forthcoming visit to this country, Premier Hua will probably extend an invitation to the Prime Minister to pay an official visit to China.

The Chinese will undoubtedly hope that the Prime Minister will be able to take up such an invitation in the reasonably near future, in exchange for Premier Hua's own visit to Britain. No British Prime Minister in office has ever visited China, although the Heads of Government of most of our principal Western European partners (including France and West Germany) have done so.

Lord Carrington considers that a visit by the Prime Minister to China would be of significant value, in reassuring the Chinese of our commitment to the further development of our bilateral relationship, and promoting our political and commercial interests in China. However, he considers that the timing of such a visit will need careful consideration, in the context of the Prime Minister's other commitments; the possibility of further visits to China by members of the Royal Family; and the question of establishing the right balance between exchanges with China and exchanges with the Warsaw Pact countries. Officials are currently preparing a paper to consider these issues.

Lord Carrington recommends that at this stage the Prime Minister should do no more than accept in principle any invitation from Premier Hua, and express the hope that she will be able to take it up in the not too distant future. Lord Carrington proposes to respond similarly to any invitation he may receive from Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua (who also visited Britain last October).

I should be grateful to know the Prime Minister's views.

*If need be - I must go.
But not before Easter.*

yours ever

Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)

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