

PRIME MINISTER TO VISIT CHINA

Press Association are reporting that the LPS, who is currently visiting China, announced today after talks with the Chinese Premier, Zhao Ziyang, that the Prime Minister will make an official visit to China in September. He is reported to have said that the exact dates have not yet been fixed but that the visit would take place some time between 16 and 29 September.

The FCO have not yet received a transcript of his remarks, which were apparently made at a press briefing.

We should take the following line:

- The Prime Minister was invited to visit China by the former Premier (Premier Hua), which he extended whilst visiting this country in 1979. The invitation was renewed by the current Premier during Lord Carrington's visit to China last April.
- The Prime Minister hopes to be able to accept the invitation later this year but, as the LPS has said, the exact dates are not yet fixed. If asked if the visit is to take place between 16 and 29 September, we should repeat that the exact dates have not yet been fixed but acknowledge that the visit is likely to take place around that time.
- If asked whether the Prime Minister will visit any other countries in the region, we should say that this is under consideration but details have not yet been finalised.

PRIME MINISTER

China

You will see from the attached that the press are reporting an announcement by the Lord Privy Seal that you will visit China in September. It may well be that he is being mis-reported and that he had no alternative to saying something of this kind in reply to a question at a press conference. We will establish the facts overnight and I shall let you know how this premature announcement came about. In any case, it may be that no great harm has been done. The fact that you were thinking of taking up the outstanding invitation to China was fairly generally known.

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A.J.C.  $\frac{6}{1}$

6 January, 1982

There is really  
 no problem. I  
 expect to go in  
 September. not.