

Mr Cole to see *AA* 2/10.

Chinese Church Leaders

The Prime Minister duly received the Chinese Christians (as listed) on 18 October and, after the preliminaries of a photo-call, talked to them for nearly 40 minutes. All but one spoke good English. Nevertheless, the conversation lacked animation on the Chinese side, and obliged the Prime Minister to stimulate discussion by herself introducing a series of topics supposedly of interest to them. This was contrary to expectations, since the letter of 21 September from the British Council of Churches (BCC) had indicated a number of substantive points which it was said that the Chinese wished to raise. In practice they asked virtually no questions.

The Prime Minister welcomed the Chinese visitors very warmly, and in particular acknowledged the truly dedicated and often sacrificial efforts by which they and the minority Christian Church in China had kept their faith alive during the long period of suppression. In reply to questioning they gave some details of their present strength and activities, and of the attitude of the Chinese Government to the Church. They said that establishment of the rule of law had become an important priority - ranking in importance with economic and political objectives in the new China: and the criminal law now provided against the violation of the religious consciences of individuals.

The Prime Minister applauded this, but emphasised her belief that it was the task of the Church - and of Church leaders - to preach the Gospel and teach moral and spiritual precepts. This, uniquely, was their god-given responsibility and a matter on which the State must look to the Church for inspiration and leadership.

The meeting ended rather desultorily with the Prime Minister responding to a question (which originated more from the BCC Secretariat than from the Chinese) on the procedure for selecting and appointing Bishops and Archbishops.

AA

PRIME MINISTER

Chinese Church Leaders

You are receiving on Monday (5.30 pm) this group of seven Chinese Christians at the end of their three-week visit to Britain and Ireland. They represent the China Christian Council (CCC), a Protestant body which embraces all denominations except the Roman Catholics.

The leader is Bishop Ting, an Anglican, who speaks English and is President of the CCC; one of the group is a woman. In attendance will be two representatives of the British Council of Churches (who have sponsored the tour), Mr Terry Waite (the Archbishop of Canterbury's assistant), and an interpreter. (Names etc at Flag A.)

The visit is to last only 30 minutes, and you could perhaps receive them in the White Drawing Room. I do not think it would be necessary to serve refreshments.

Since the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when all religious minorities endured great hardship and were under threat of extinction, there has been a slow emergence of the Chinese Church and a gradual fading of its image as a Western religion. The Protestants, now styled the 'Three-Self Movement' (self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating), have been accepted by China's rulers as thoroughly Chinese both in organisation and in commitment to the new China. The delegation's visit to Britain, which enjoys official approval, marks a further stage in this process and is in return for a visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to China last January.

/According

According to Press reports, Bishop Ting is keen to learn from the West more about church-state relationships. Questions which may possibly be raised during the visit are at Flag B.

RC

15 October 1982

A

Visit of Chinese Church Leaders, 18 October, 1982

Chinese Delegation (surnames underlined)

Bishop Guang-xun (K H TING) was ordained in the Anglican Church in China. At the time of the Revolution he was on the staff of the World Student Christian Federation in Geneva. He chose to return to China and lived in Nanking. At a time when few visits between China and the West were possible he attended the 1956 Lambeth Conference. He is now President of the China Christian Council, Chairman of the National Christian Three-Self Movement and Principal of the re-opened Nanking Theological Seminary.

Bishop ZHENG Jian-ye is Vice-President and General Secretary of the China Christian Council.

Professor ZHAO Fu-san is a Vice-Chairman of the National Christian Three-Self Movement Committee and Deputy Director of the Institute for the study of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Mrs Phoebe Shi LI is Vice-President of the China Christian Council and Associate General Secretary of the National YWCA.

Mr HAN Wen-zao is Associate General Secretary of the China Christian Council and the National Christian Three-Self Movement Committee.

The Reverend ZHENG Yu-gui is a member of the Standing Committee of the China Christian Council and Vice-President and General Secretary of the Fukien Provincial Christian Council.

Mr ZHAO Zhi-lian is a student at the Nanking Union Theological Seminary.

British Council of Churches

The Reverend Dr Philip Morgan, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches

Mr Michael E Rose, CMG, Chairman of the Division of International Affairs of the BCC

Mr Terry Waite, Archbishop's Assistant for Anglican Communion Affairs

Mrs Linda Trew, Interpreter

The visitors will be wearing name-badges.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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GS/MB

Mr. Robin Catford,
Secretary for Appointments,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1

14th October, 1982

Dear Mr. Catford,

Further to our correspondence regarding the visit of representatives of the China Christian Council to Downing Street on 18th October, I give below questions which the delegation would like to put to the Prime Minister.

1. The recent visit of the Prime Minister to China indicates a common interest of the two countries in developing their economic and cultural relations. Can the churches of our two countries help develop these relations?
2. Since the 1960's, some English churchmen have coined the phrase "post-Christian era" to describe the present situation in the United Kingdom. During our visit, we have been deeply impressed by the efforts of the church to engage herself in answering various social problems. How does the Prime Minister evaluate the church's impact on and contribution to society in recent years?

In what does the Prime Minister think the strength and the weaknesses of the churches in Britain consist?

3. During the last two decades, Britain has become richer. However, people seem to be concerned about trends in family relations, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other juvenile problems which affect the quality of life. Is this an alarmist view? Can any direction be discerned in the developments which are taking place in Britain?
4. International relations are increasingly pluralistic. Within this pluralism, what are the most urgent threats to world peace, and does Britain have proposals for a solution? Are we right in thinking that Great Britain needs to give more consideration to its relations with the Third World?
5. After the economic growth of the 60's and early 70's there seems to be a general stagnation and growing unemployment in the west. Most economists forecast that there will be a period of at the best slow, but perhaps negative economic growth ahead. There are also different estimates of the British economy. What are the advantageous and disadvantageous factors in the British and world economy and what measures will the British government adopt to foster economic growth and job stability?

cont.

The visitors will arrive in a Minicoach registration number ALW 330Y and a car from Lambeth Palace. The number of the latter is not yet known, but it will be a Mercedes 500 SEL and we will let you know the registration number of this as soon as it is to hand.

The visitors will be wearing name badges.

Yours sincerely,

M. Beattie

pp:Rev. Gordon Shaw
Asia Secretary

MISS STEPHENS

Prime Minister

you I can arrange
with. Cf. 4/3

Must not

The Archbishop of Canterbury's office telephoned today to ask whether the Prime Minister might be prepared to receive, briefly, a delegation of five Christian leaders from China who are visiting the United Kingdom for three weeks in October at the invitation of the British Council of Churches.

The delegation will be led by Bishop Ding, whom the Archbishop of Canterbury visited when he was in China earlier this year.

If this were at all possible in principle, the dates suggested are October 18, 19 or 20 (with a slight preference for October 18).

In Church terms what is happening in China at the moment is extremely interesting, with the Chinese Christians emerging from hiding and the non-catholics forming a single Chinese Church. I do not know whether the Prime Minister would be interested in meeting this party for half an hour, if the diary permits, but any such visit would obviously be enormously appreciated by the Chinese and by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

CVP

Mr Peterson

wd 1730 on
Monday 18: be
convenient? Cf.

5/3.

3 March 1982