



Prime Minister
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puts the first two pages
in perspective.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 December 1982

DB
 MS
 Dear John,

Chinese Ministerial Visits

You might like to have the list of possible Chinese ministerial visits to Britain over the next year or two.

a) Prime Minister (Zhao Ziyang)

In your letter of 21 October, you told us that the Prime Minister agreed that her invitation to Zhao should be confirmed. We sent appropriate instructions to Peking. But Zhao is due to visit about ten African countries in December/January and Australasia in April or May 1983. He may plan to visit the United States later in the year. It is unlikely that he will take up our invitation in the next few months.

b) Foreign Trade Minister (Madame Chen Muhua)

The Chinese say that Madame Chen is considering 'positively' the invitation to her to visit Britain which the Prime Minister extended in September. A 1983 visit may therefore be on the cards.

c) Defence Minister (Zhang Aiping)

The Chinese have not yet returned Mr Pym's visit as Defence Secretary (March 1980). For some time an informal personal invitation has also been outstanding to Zhang Aiping. The Chinese hinted recently that Zhang might be able to visit Britain next year, and the Ministry of Defence would like to follow this up with a formal invitation. We have an interest in maintaining the momentum of defence exchanges with China, and the conclusion of the £120m Luda contract (Project 051) means that the atmosphere would be favourable for doing so.

/Foreign

d) Foreign Minister (Wu Xueqian)

The Chinese have not yet returned Lord Carrington's visit to China (April 1981). Huang Hua's successor has had little contact with Britain, and a visit in the next few months could be useful. Wu may accompany Zhao's party on his forthcoming visits, so an early visit to Western Europe may be difficult. We may also need to invite the new Vice Foreign Minister, expected to be appointed soon, who will have specific responsibility for China's relations with Western Europe.

e) Economic Minister (Zhang Jingfu)

If Zhang is host in January for the visit by the Secretary of State for Industry, it would be natural to extend a return invitation. But the Chinese will probably give precedence to the proposed visit by Madame Chen Muhua.

f) Science and Technology Minister (Fang Yi)

Fang is responsible for science and technology and an invitation to him has been outstanding since 1980. The Ambassador in Peking has recommended that the Industry Secretary should renew this in January. We have not hitherto made sufficient capital in China of British achievements in science and technology; such a visit could help.

g) Minister for Public Health (Cui Yueli)

The DHSS wish to invite Cui and possibly also his predecessor, Qian Xinzong, now Minister for Family Planning, to visit Britain. This would be a return for the visit to China in 1980 by the Minister for Health (Dr Vaughan). Anglo-Chinese medical exchanges have lost momentum in the last year or so. We see advantage in trying to regain this, not least because of the export opportunities in the health-care field.

h) Minister for Culture (Zhu Muzhi)

The Chinese may seek to revive an outstanding British Council invitation to Zhu's predecessor, who resigned in May. The British Council would probably be content to agree.

/Although



Although this seems a long list, on past experience it is highly unlikely that more than 2 or 3 of these Ministers would actually come to Britain in 1983. The Chinese are themselves keen to avoid inappropriate bunching of their visits overseas. But if some of these visits take place it would help redress a certain imbalance in Anglo-Chinese exchanges over the last 2 years (the last Chinese visitor of equivalent to Cabinet rank was Vice Premier Kang Shi-en in June 1980).

As for Hong Kong, if the talks hit serious difficulties it is possible that the Chinese might cancel (or threaten to cancel) an announced visit so as to increase their pressure on us. (They have used this weapon against both the US and Japan in different contexts in the last 2 years.) But we do not think this would in practice greatly increase our difficulties. More generally we think that such visits are likely to have a steadying effect on confidence in Hong Kong by demonstrating that we are carrying on 'business as usual' and that practical UK/China co-operation remains the backcloth to our discussions over Hong Kong's future. A Ministerial visit might also (depending on the status and nature of the visitor) provide an opportunity to do some discreet education and perhaps convey a message in a less formal way than would be possible at the negotiating table. But we should in any case need to keep matters under review as the talks progress.

Because of these Hong Kong considerations I am not copying this letter to other Private Offices.

Yours ever

John Holmes

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Private Secretary

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 December, 1982.

Chinese Ministerial Visits

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 1 December.

A. J. COLES

J.E. Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.