



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister
Agree to X below.

A. J. C. 14/4

14 April, 1983

Yes - in principle
over lunch
as before

Dear John,

Future of Hong Kong: Possible Visit by EXCO Unofficials

At the meeting on 9 March with Sir Edward Youde and Sir Percy Cradock the Prime Minister agreed that it would be useful if the Governor were to bring a group of Unofficials to London again before too long.

The Governor has now proposed (Hong Kong telegram number 478, copy enclosed) that he should invite all nine EXCO Unofficials to accompany him since it would be difficult to exclude some of them. He makes it clear that such a visit would not take place before the Chinese reply to the Prime Minister's message to Premier Zhao, but he hopes it could happen before June when a Chinese announcement is expected.

We welcome the idea of such a visit in principle, since it is clearly most important from the Hong Kong end that EXCO are seen to be closely consulted and kept in the picture not just by the Governor but also by Ministers in London. We also agree that an attempt to bring a smaller party might create difficulties for both the Governor and for Sir S Y Chung, the Senior Unofficial.

However it is difficult to be definite at this stage over the timing. With Zhao Ziyang away in Australia and New Zealand until late April we may well not get a Chinese reply until the end of April or into May. If the reply is a favourable one, enabling us to get down to substantive talks, both we and EXCO might want to see how the talks went for a while and then have a meeting in London to discuss developments including a Chinese announcement. We should avoid having two high powered visits too close together. If on the other hand the Chinese reply is unhelpful it would probably be right to have an earlier EXCO visit, which could discuss among other things the way in which we should respond to a tougher Chinese announcement.

In short, we believe that we should not try to reach any conclusion yet on dates. Nonetheless we see no reason why the Governor should not be instructed to tell EXCO, strictly for their information only, that he has been in touch with those concerned about the possibility of taking Unofficials to London at some point in the next two or three months, and that this idea has been welcomed by Ministers in principle. If the

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Prime Minister agrees we will reply to the Governor as above.
We have told him that we will try to give him a reply before
20 April, when he is due to meet EXCO again.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Holmes".

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street

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FM HONG KONG 081025Z APR 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 478 OF 8 APRIL
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING (PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADOR)

FUTURE OF HONG KONG: POSSIBLE VISIT TO LONDON BY EXCO UNOFFICIALS.

1. IT WAS AGREED AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING ON 9 MARCH THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF I WERE TO TAKE A GROUP OF UNOFFICIALS TO LONDON AGAIN BEFORE TOO LONG. THE PRIME MINISTER SAW SIR S.Y. CHUNG WHEN HE VISITED LONDON PRIVATELY IN DECEMBER, AND SHE AND LORD BELSTEAD BOTH HAD MEETING WITH UMELCO DURING THEIR VISITS HERE. BUT IT IS NOW SEVEN MONTHS SINCE THE LAST VISIT BY UNOFFICIALS SPECIFICALLY TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE, AND IT IS PRESENTATIONALLY IMPORTANT FOR EXCO TO BE SEEN TO MAINTAIN REGULAR CONTACT WITH MINISTERS. FROM THE SUBSTANTIVE POINT OF VIEW SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE VALUABLE WHATEVER THE CHINESE RESPONSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE: WHETHER IT IS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE MINISTERS WILL PRESUMABLY WISH TO HAVE UNOFFICIALS' VIEWS ON THE WAY FORWARD, AND THEY WILL CERTAINLY EXPECT TO BE CONSULTED.
2. ON THIS OCCASION I WOULD PROPOSE TO INVITE ALL (ALL) EXCO UNOFFICIALS TO ACCOMPANY ME. IT WOULD BE INVIDIOUS TO CHOOSE AMONG THEM, AND IT WOULD PROBABLY BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE UNOFFICIALS THEMSELVES TO ATTEMPT TO DO SO. AT THE SAME TIME, I AM SURE THAT UMELCO AS A WHOLE WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT FRANK DISCUSSION WOULD BE INHIBITED IF NON-EXCO MEMBERS WERE TO BE INVOLVED.
3. THE TIMING OF SUCH A VISIT WOULD DEPEND ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS, NOT LEAST THE PRIME MINISTER'S PROGRAMME. IT SHOULD CLEARLY TAKE PLACE AFTER THE CHINESE HAVE REPLIED TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO ZHAO SO THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH MINISTERS COULD BE HELD IN THE LIGHT OF THE REPLY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE VISIT SHOULD NOT BE DELAYED FOR TOO LONG, GIVEN THE RISK OF A CHINESE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THEIR PLAN AT THE NPC, WHICH SOME REPORTS SUGGEST COULD BE HELD EARLY IN JUNE. THESE CONSIDERATIONS SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD BE THINKING IN TERMS OF AROUND THE MIDDLE OF MAY.
4. UNLESS YOU SEE OBJECTION, I PROPOSE TO TELL EXCO AT THEIR MEETING ON 13 APRIL THAT I AM IN TOUCH WITH THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING UNOFFICIALS TO LONDON AT SOME POINT IN THE NEXT MONTH OR SO, AND THAT THIS IDEA HAS BEEN WELCOMED BY MINISTERS IN PRINCIPLE. I WOULD NOT NEED TO SAY ANYTHING MORE SPECIFIC ABOUT DATES AT THIS STAGE.

YOUDE

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

LIMITED

HD/HKGD
HD/FED
HD/PLANNING STAFF
HD/FUSD
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PS/MR HURD
PS/LORD BELSTEAD
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MR DONALD

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Hong Kong

file VC 58

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 April 1983

Future of Hong Kong: Possible Visit
by EXCO Unofficials

Thank you for your letter of 14 April about the possibility of Sir Edward Youde bringing a group of Unofficials to London again in the relatively near future.

The Prime Minister agrees that we should not attempt to arrange a firm date at the moment; but the Governor could be instructed to tell EXCO, strictly for their own information, that he has been in touch about the possibility of taking Unofficials to London at some point in the next two or three months, and that this idea has been welcomed by Ministers in principle.

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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