



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 February 1980

Dear Michael,

Prime Minister

Yes ✓
 Agree that the visit
 should go ahead? ①

PROPOSED NAVAL VISIT TO CHINA

The Chinese Embassy in London, on instructions, have invited the Ministry of Defence to arrange a ship visit to China by the Royal Navy.

Lord Carrington considers that it would be in keeping with our improved relations with China if this invitation were to be accepted. A Royal Navy Task Group of five ships will be in the area in September after first spending some time in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean earlier in the summer. Mr Pym has said that the Group would be able to call at Shanghai, and Lord Carrington agrees that a visit by the Group at that time would be appropriate.

Provided the Prime Minister approves, the Ministry of Defence will inform the Chinese Embassy of their willingness to go ahead with the proposed visit on these lines. No announcement will be made until the details have been settled with the Chinese.

I am copying this letter to Brian Norbury in the MOD.

Yours ever
 Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)

M O'D B Alexander Esq
 10 Downing Street

15 FEB 1980



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18 February 1980

PROPOSED NAVAL VISIT TO CHINA

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 15 February on this subject. She agrees that the ship visit to China by the Royal Navy may go ahead.

I am copying this letter to Brian Norbury (MOD).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

CHINESE NAVY DELEGATION - SUBMARINE VISIT

Thank you for your minute MO 8/14 of 28 August about the possible visit of a Chinese naval delegation to a Royal Navy Submarine.

I agree that, in order to promote Chinese interest in other defence equipment purchases, we should not refuse their request. But it is important to avoid giving them any impression that we might be willing to consider selling them submarines. It is equally important that neither the Soviet Union nor our COCOM partners should get that impression. We are likely to have enough trouble securing COCOM's acquiescence in our exports of much less sensitive defence equipment.

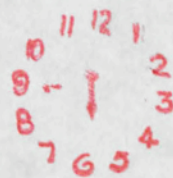
I am content therefore for the visit to go ahead provided that the conditions in paragraph 5 of your letter are made absolutely clear to the Chinese and provided that there are strict controls on publicity. We do not want photographs of the visit appearing in the press.

I am sending copies of this minute to the other members of OD as well as to Sir John Hunt.

7 September 1979

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-218 9000
DIRECT DIALLING 01-218 2111

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Ans. 30/8

LORD PRIVY SEAL

CHINESE NAVY VISIT TO THE ROYAL NAVY EQUIPMENT EXHIBITION

As you may know, we are expecting a delegation from the Peoples Republic of China to visit the Royal Navy Equipment Exhibition at Portsmouth from 10th - 14th September. I understand that the delegation will be led by the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Chinese Navy, and they have asked to stay in the UK for two weeks after the Exhibition to see something of the Royal Navy and of the British Naval Equipment industry.

2. The Chinese have already given us some indication of the sort of things they would like to see and do, including visits to RN Type 21 and Type 42 ships at sea, discussions on Sea Dart and Sea Wolf missiles and the Lynx helicopter, and visits to a Naval base and to Naval training establishments. For the most part these requests do not present us with any problems and we are arranging a programme accordingly.
3. There is, however, one area in which the Chinese have expressed considerable interest and have asked to have included in the programme which is more sensitive, and that is submarines and underwater weapons. The Chinese have made it clear that they would regard the inclusion of a visit to a submarine in their programme as very important and positive gesture on our part which would contribute substantially to the success of the visit.
4. In strict security terms, there would be no difficulties in a visit to an Oberon conventional submarine (SSK). This could easily be rigged to enable a visit to be conducted at a purely unclassified level. I believe that it would be an appropriate gesture Navy to Navy to offer such a visit and the Royal Navy would be happy to make the necessary arrangements.

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5. Of course, when we discussed the sale of defence equipment to China in OD on 11th June, we ruled out the sale of submarines to China. It would, therefore, have to be made clear to the Chinese that the visit was being arranged as a courtesy only and that there could be no follow-up or technical discussion. This, however, I believe would be easier for them to swallow than an outright refusal.

6. Unless, therefore, you see any objections, I propose to go ahead and include a visit to an SSK in the Chinese programme.

7. I am copying this minute to the other members of OD, and to Sir John Hunt.

28th August 1979

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