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Prime Minister
Robin observes that
Mr. Gentleman has
recently produced a
book of ~~some~~ prints of
contemporary London
which has won much
praise.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 May, 1985

Dear Charles, Agree to commission a picture from him of Downing St. ?

Visit by Premier Zhao Ziyang: Gift

During Premier Zhao's visit from 2 to 8 June it would be appropriate for the Prime Minister to present a gift. We know that Premier Zhao will bring a gift, but not yet what it will be.

CDP
7/5

When the Prime Minister visited Peking in December she presented a Scholar 2 Ferranti word processor (given by the company). Premier Zhao gave her a hand-made porcelain plate bearing her portrait. We think that it would appear repetitious to present another high-technology gift so soon after the last visit. Instead, something artistic and individual, which would be a fitting memento for the Premier of his visit, would seem more suitable. An idea which meets all these criteria would be to commission a watercolour painting by David Gentleman of a scene which Premier Zhao will see during his visit.

Informal soundings with the artist reveal that he would be willing to undertake such a commission for £500 (half what he would normally charge) if he could be given 3 or 4 subjects from which to choose. We could suggest as possible subjects: Downing Street, Horseguards from St James's Park, the Palace of Westminster, or the Thames Barrier. The cost is within existing limits on expenditure.

We should be grateful to know soon if this suggestion is acceptable. Mr Gentleman would need to start work quickly in order to complete painting and framing in time for the visit.

I am a little unhappy about this. I am not sure that I would like a water-colour of the Peoples Hall in Peking.

Yours ever,
Peter Ricketts

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

This water colour would be more suitable for a Commission P.M.