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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 January, 1985.

Possible Visit by the Chinese Prime Minister to Hong Kong

Thank you for your letter of 25 January about the hints that Premier Zhao Ziyang might visit Hong Kong in June.

The Prime Minister agrees that the balance of advantage lies in accepting a visit, and has commented that it will be easier within a few months of the agreement than it would be two or three years later. She agrees, too, that the next step must be for the Governor to consult his senior officials and EXCO.

C.D. Powell

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

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Yes - it will be easier within a few months of the agreement than it would be 2 or 3 years later

25 January 1985

*Prime Minister
Agree to accept a visit by Zhao to Hong Kong on the terms suggested.*

Dear Charles,

*CDP
25/1*

Possible Visit by Chinese Prime Minister to Hong Kong

The Chinese have told us through Sir Y K Pao that has suggested a visit to Hong Kong by Premier Zhao Ziyang, in connection with his visit to London in early June.

The tentative nature of this approach suggests that the Chinese are anxious not to risk a rebuff from us on this subject. If we were to return a clear negative to their approach, we would probably hear no more of the idea. On the other hand if we were to give a generally positive response, we would then be more or less committed to accepting a visit if the Chinese proposed it formally.

We have discussed this with the Governor. The advantages of a visit to Hong Kong would be as follows:

- (a) we have an interest in Chinese leaders gaining first-hand knowledge of Hong Kong and how it works. A properly organised visit could reduce the lingering suspicion in Peking about the intentions of HMG and the Hong Kong Government in the transitional period;
- (b) provided the visit was properly handled, it would provide further reassurance for Hong Kong about Chinese intentions and the relationship between Hong Kong and the PRC;
- (c) a visit to Hong Kong might be more acceptable to public opinion there as part of a visit which always included London.

There are also potential disadvantages. Some in Hong Kong might be sensitive about a visit by such a senior Chinese figure so soon after signature of the Agreement. There could also be difficulties about arrangements for a visit.

If a visit was to take place, it would have to be organised by the Hong Kong Government and the Chinese would have to accept normal Hong Kong Government protocol. The

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members of the Executive and Legislative Councils would have to be given their proper place in the programme. There would also be the question of who should issue the invitation. In the Governor's view it might be best for the Prime Minister to invite Zhao to visit Hong Kong on his way back to Peking. Close consultation on security would also be essential.

The Governor concludes that the balance of advantage lies in accepting a visit from Zhao provided that the Chinese are prepared to meet the conditions in the paragraph above. Sir Geoffrey Howe shares his view. But he thought that the Prime Minister would wish to be aware of the position. Provided she agrees, the next step would be for the Governor to consult his official advisers and EXCO, stressing the need for confidentiality. If EXCO were content and no further problems arose, an answer would then be passed to the Chinese indicating that we would in principle accept a visit by Zhao to Hong Kong and referring to the conditions set out above.

Yes
no

For ever,
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

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