



CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

Do you agree that there
should be no Royal visits until
there is an agreement on Hong Kong?
Perhaps we should consider having a
Foreign and Commonwealth Office visit by
a minor Royal as
London SW1A 2AH a way of signifying
approval if and when
we make ~~major~~ ^{major}
progress, but not until then?

25 October 1982

FERS

25.10.

Dear John,

Royal Visits to China

You have asked for advice on whether, in the light of the Prime Minister's recent visit to Peking, earlier plans for Royal Visits to China should be pursued. This follows Tim Flesher's letter of 11 August recording the Prime Minister's view that matters should not be taken further until after her return from the Far East, when they could be considered against the background of her discussions with the Chinese.

We had been developing plans for a visit by Princess Margaret in May 1983, and a possible State Visit by Her Majesty The Queen in 1984. Visits by the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince and Princess of Wales also appear as possibilities on the Royal Visits Committee's schedule, but these have not so far been given serious consideration.

In the aftermath of the Prime Minister's visit, the Ambassador has recommended that plans both for Princess Margaret and for the State Visit should be set aside for the time being. He argues that at the time of Princess Margaret's proposed visit, May 1983, we could be at a difficult stage in our negotiations with the Chinese over the future of Hong Kong, with consequent strain in our relations and a hostile Chinese press. A visit in such circumstances might embarrass Princess Margaret, as well as HMG. Similar considerations apply to moving forward in present circumstances with advance planning for a State Visit

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by The Queen in 1984. The Ambassador argues that a substantial gesture of this kind could expose us to the charge of inconsistency in our dealings with the Chinese if we were having at the same time to respond to troubled relations over Hong Kong.

We agree with the Ambassador's advice. It is customary to regard Royal Visits as symbolic occasions. Certainly the Chinese would look upon any major visit by a senior member of the Royal Family (even if linked with a cultural event) in this way. It would therefore be inappropriate to proceed with earlier plans until we once again have the prospect, as last Spring we hoped to have, of a steady development of our relations with a State Visit in due course as a suitable culmination. That prospect is likely to emerge again if and when we have been able to negotiate an agreement on the future of Hong Kong but not before. Then Royal Visits might usefully mark the opening of a new chapter in Anglo-Chinese relations. In the meantime they would carry the risk of embarrassment.

If the Prime Minister agrees, we will brief the Royal Visits Committee accordingly early next month and of course advise Princess Margaret.

Yours ever

J E Holmes

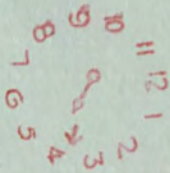
(J E Holmes)

Private Secretary

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CONFIDENTIAL

Royal family: Prince & Princess's possible visit
to China 8/82



25 OCT 1982



10 DOWNING STREET

Mr. Butler

I was not aware of these papers (except the last one).

2. I think it is at least open to question whether, given our difficulties with the Chinese, and the complete uncertainty as to how relations will fare between now and May/June, 1953, it is right for Sir Alexander Sargent's plans to Peking to go ahead.

3. I have asked the F/C.O. to let us have advice.

A.S.C. $\frac{14}{10}$.

Mr. Coler $\frac{15}{10}$.

I was not aware of the earlier papers either. I agree with the action you have taken. I also doubt whether it is justified for Princess Margaret to go solely to Peking at public expense. FERB 14.10

John.

The FCO are asking of the PM
is content for the FCO to advise Princess
Margaret that the Far East Test of the Royal Ballet
is acceptable (see Willie's minute dated 10/6/82)

Sir Robert Armstrong's minute
to Robin (15/9/82) and Robin's reply (4/10/82)
seem to kill any bf on the file.

Are you content that we let
the FCO know that the PM has no objections or
would you prefer to ask the PM again.

Over
14/10.