



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Agree that we should continue
to advise the Palace against
a visit by Princess Margaret to
Peking in May?
A.S.C. 27/1.

27 January, 1983

Yes - Hong Kong news
renewed
mt

Dear John,

Royal Visits to China

Robin Butler's letter of 12 November 1982 confirmed the Prime Minister's view that it would be better for Princess Margaret not to visit Peking in May 1983 at the time of the Royal Ballet performances there, and recorded that the Princess had accepted this advice.

The question has now been reopened by the Chinese. At the end of last month the Senior Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy called on the FCO's Far Eastern Department to say that he had been asked to find out whether Princess Margaret might visit Peking at the time of the Royal Ballet performances. If this would not pose protocol or practical difficulties for us his Government would like to extend a formal invitation. The Department undertook to consider the proposal and to let the Embassy have an answer in due course.

We have therefore looked again very carefully at the arguments, seeing some differences between a visit at our initiative and a visit at the invitation of the Chinese. Consultation with Sir P Cradock in Peking and Sir E Youde in Hong Kong however has indicated that they remain strongly opposed to such a visit. Sir E Youde, while agreeing that business as normal should be carried on, is of the view that a visit by Princess Margaret would be badly received in Hong Kong, as a new expression of Sino-British friendship at a time when we might be going through a very difficult time on the talks. For his part, Sir P Cradock is clear that the original arguments against a visit (the advantage to the Chinese of creating the impression that all was well, and fears of an adverse reaction in Hong Kong and consequent embarrassment for the Princess) remain. He also argues that the opposite case, that we should take an opportunity to reinforce the stability of our overall relations despite difficulties over Hong Kong, is weak in that our interest in Hong Kong is the most important element in our bilateral relationship.

In the light of the strong views expressed by both the Ambassador and the Governor, Mr Pym recommends that the earlier decision that a visit to Peking would be inappropriate should stand. If the Prime Minister agrees we shall write to Princess Margaret's Private Secretary telling him that the Chinese have approached us but that it still the view of Ministers that a visit would be inappropriate; and we shall

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politely decline the Chinese suggestion on the grounds that notice is now too short.

Your ever

J E Holmes

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Royal Family,
Aug 82, Princess
Margaret's visit
to China.



27 JAN 1983



Royal Family

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 January 1983

ROYAL VISITS TO CHINA

Thank you for your letter of 27 January.

The Prime Minister agrees with the views of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and that you should therefore write to Princess Margaret's Private Secretary telling him that it is still the view of Ministers that a visit by Her Royal Highness to Peking in May would be inappropriate.

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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