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The Shaping of Britain's China Policy 1970-1976

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This thesis offers a diplomatic study of Britain's relations with the People's Republic of China under the Government of Edward Heath. It was during his premiership that diplomatic relations were upgraded to Ambassadorial level. Through exploring the diplomatic exchanges between the two countries it examines how Britain's post-Cultural Revolution relationship with China was rehabilitated to allow, in March 1972, the establishment of full diplomatic relations and the effect that this event had on the future of this bilateral relationship.

This study also contributes to the understanding of the processes by which British foreign policy was conceived and executed. It offers an analysis of the aims and ambitions of the Foreign Office during Heath's Government and compares it to those of the same department during the succeeding Wilson Government. It seeks to establish the relative roles of individual civil servants and ministers and the extent to which the two political parties put their individual stamp on the policy during their periods in office. This detailed assessment of the developing bilateral relationship over this important time provides a valuable case study of the realities of policy creation and implementation. It also offers an alternative view to the orthodox opinion that Heath's foreign policy was essentially Eurocentric.

Although there are studies of Sino-British relations up until 1972, the relationship thereafter has been neglected by scholars compared with other aspects of British foreign policy during this period. The literature then tends to take up the story from 1978 and Chinese President Deng Xiaoping's "open door policy". This account of Britain's China policy is based largely on government sources at The National Archives. Private papers, memoirs and secondary sources have also been consulted.

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Introduction

It was twenty-three years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) that Sino-British relations finally became normalised and full diplomatic mechanics came into being. Britain recognised the People's Republic in 1950; a Chinese Chargé d'Affaires was appointed to London in 1954; Britain began to vote for Beijing's admission to the United Nations in 1961; and the two governments exchanged ambassadors in 1972, a few months after the People's Republic of China had finally taken the Chinese seat at the United Nations. In retrospect this rather long process towards regularity is understandable in view of the new texture of relationship which had to be woven between the two countries.

In the post-war era both China and Britain had to adapt to new realities. China was fast emerging as a power in the modern world while Britain's status in the world was diminishing and crucial diplomatic decisions were increasingly shaped by Washington, not in London. They subscribed to opposing ideologies but the Sino-British relationship was vital to Britain's role in Asia where she still held interests, such as Hong Kong. In the Cold War world, China was allied with the Soviet Union, otherwise remaining hostile and isolated for the first twenty years of its existence. The desire to mitigate this communist alliance, along with protecting Britain's interests in the East, determined much of the architecture of China policy until the 1970s.

Factors with direct relevance to relations between Britain and China were often beyond the control of the respective capitals and did not help to break through the obstacles impeding good relations: the tightening of western trade controls on China, the formal denunciation by the United Nations of her as an aggressor in Korea, the neutralisation of the Taiwan Straits

which barred communist occupation of Taiwan and therefore wider Western and Commonwealth recognition of Beijing and finally the postponement of Beijing's first admission to a body of the United Nations. The Anglo-American special relationship also cast a long shadow over Britain's China policy. Co-operation and discussion was sought by both nations, however much their views on the issues differed. By following the American line during the 1950s, London conformed, on the whole, with the policy of ostracising the People's Republic of China from the organised world community.

Nevertheless, as these more dynamic issues came and went, the slow evolution of the relationship with the Chinese remained a constant theme of Britain's external relations. Ministers and officials shaped Britain's direct contact with China within consultations with the Atlantic Alliance and later the European Community. By the end of the 1960s, China had emerged from the internal tumult of the Cultural Revolution and the Sino-Soviet split; a thaw in relations with Britain seemed possible especially as Washington's new Nixon Administration had also expressed a willingness to negotiate with the Chinese communists. British and Chinese policy makers committed to renew their relationship in the 1970s, which led to the upgrade in diplomatic relations to Ambassadorial level and a successful programme of cultural, Ministerial and commercial exchanges.

Sino-British relations 1792-1949

On 26 September 1792, George Lord Viscount Macartney, the first British envoy to reach China, sailed from Portsmouth with a commission as Ambassador Extraordinary and

Plenipotentiary from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China.¹ In the eighteenth century, western commercial contacts with China had increased, particularly because of the rising demand for tea. The aims of the Mission therefore, were to position Sino-British relations on a treaty basis, redress various grievances in the existing commercial arrangements at Guangzhou, open new ports to trade in north and central China and, if possible, establish a permanent Embassy in China. Unfortunately, this first encounter of the two greatest powers on earth was not a success.² Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty responded to the various requests which Macartney had made, in each case refusing them: there was no question of allowing foreign trade at ports other than Guangzhou or of providing a site near there where foreign merchants might reside; dynastic regulations would not permit the accrediting of a foreign national at court; it was not acceptable to allow the propagation of Christianity in China; as for the gifts which Macartney had sent on behalf of King George III, the planetarium, the clocks and the barometer, they were all ungratefully received, with the emperor informing Macartney, "...We possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures". The Ambassador left Beijing on 7 October and later noted in his journal,

The Empire of China is an old, crazy, First rate man-of-war, which a fortunate succession of able and vigilant officers have contrived to keep afloat for these one hundred and fifty years past, and to overawe their neighbours merely by her bulk and appearance, but whenever an insufficient man happens to have the command upon deck, adieu to the discipline and safety of the ship. She may perhaps not sink outright; she may drift some time as a wreck, and will then be dashed to pieces on the shore; but she can never be rebuilt on the old bottom.³

¹ J.L. Cranmer-Byng (ed.), *An Embassy to China: Being the journal kept by Lord Macartney during his embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung, 1793-1794* (London: Longman, 1962); T. Wang, 'The Macartney Mission: a bicentennial review', in R.A. Bickers (ed.), *Ritual and Diplomacy: The Macartney Mission to China 1792-1794* (London: The British Association for Chinese Studies and Wellsweep, 1993) pp. 43-56.

² H. Kissinger, *On China* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2011) pp. 35-45.

³ Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China*, pp. 212-213.

This was Britain's first diplomatic peek under the "Bamboo Curtain" and the episode serves well to illustrate the huge cultural gulf between the two countries.⁴

Britain's history with China has been filled with fraught encounters. The First Opium War, 1839-1842, between the two countries was fought on conflicting viewpoints on diplomatic relations, trade, and the administration of justice. Chinese officials wished to stop what was perceived as an outflow of silver and to control the spread of opium, and confiscated supplies of opium from British traders.⁵ The British Government, though not denying China's right to control imports, objected to this seizure and used its newly developed military power to enforce violent redress. In 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing, the first of what the Chinese later called the "unequal treaties", granted an indemnity to Britain of \$21, 000,000 to cover the cost of the war and of the opium which had been confiscated, the opening of five ports (Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai) to British trade and residence, and the cession of Hong Kong Island. Although the trading of opium was the root cause of the conflict, John K. Fairbank has reasoned that the First Opium War escalated essentially because it became a conflict between Eastern and Western cultures. It was firstly a clash between two conceptions of international order – the western system of national states and the Chinese political belief in the mandate of heaven; conflicting economic conceptions – Chinese self-sufficiency and Western belief in free trade; and a dispute over legal institutions.⁶

⁴ The concept of the Bamboo Curtain is similar to that of the Iron Curtain. It describes an invisible line between East Asia and the West, forming a cultural, linguistic and later, an ideological, barrier.

⁵ J.K. Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast: the opening of treaty ports, 1842-1854* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964) pp. 74-84. See also, R. Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign devils in the Qing Empire 1832-1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

⁶ Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast*, p. 74.

The Treaty of Nanjing was the first of a series of agreements made between China and the Western states and it foreshadowed similar agreements concluded by the Western powers with Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand. These agreements are collectively known as the “unequal treaties” on the grounds that they conveyed benefits to the West, without affording reciprocal benefits to the Asiatic states which were forced to sign them. These treaties had four characteristic features: the opening of treaty ports to foreign trade and residence; the provision of extraterritoriality, which removed foreigners from the jurisdiction of Chinese courts; the fixing of external tariffs by treaty; and what became known as the “most favoured nation clause”, a provision guaranteeing that if after the signing of the treaty the Asiatic power should confer additional privileges on another state, those privileges would automatically accrue to the Western state which had obtained the earlier agreement. The last provision had the effect of tying the agreements together into what has been referred to as the “unequal treaty system”.⁷

Both Britain and China were soon to express their dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Nanjing and a Second Opium War (1856–60) became inevitable. The British were frustrated at the failure of the treaty to satisfy their goals of improved trade and diplomatic relations. Four years of violence, with British forces suffering heavy casualties, culminated with the Earl of Elgin ordering the burning of the Summer Palace in Beijing. As a consequence China was forced to accept a further unequal treaty, the Convention of Beijing, which increased the indemnity payable, opened Tianjin as a treaty port and ceded Jiulong (Kowloon) peninsula opposite Hong Kong to Britain.

⁷ J.A.G. Roberts, *The Complete History of China* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003) pp.255-257.

The character of the succeeding period in Sino-British relations was thus set – incomprehension and compulsion from both sides. As Thomas Babington Macaulay articulated in the House of Commons,

With regard to China, it should be recollected that that country was not only removed from us by a much greater distance than India, but that those who were permitted to go nearest knew but little of it; for over the internal policy of China a veil was thrown, through which a slight glimpse only could be caught, sufficient only to raise the imagination, and as likely to mislead as to give information.⁸

In accordance with the treaties, a British Legation opened in Beijing on 26 March 1861. In the following few years British Consulates opened throughout the Empire, including Wuhan, Kaohsiung, Taipei, Shanghai and Xiamen.⁹ In June 1898 the Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory (Second Convention of Beijing) was signed and the New Territories were leased to Britain for 99 years rent-free, expiring on 30 June 1997.¹⁰ Defence of Hong Kong was the main priority of the contract and it provided Britain with full jurisdiction of the newly acquired land, essential in ensuring the military defence of the colony.

The growth of foreign influence in China brought intermittent resistance from the Chinese. However, between 1898 and 1901 there was a more substantial reaction: the Boxer Rebellion, which took place in response to foreign “spheres of influence” in China, with grievances ranging from opium traders, political invasion, economic manipulation, to missionary evangelism.¹¹ In China, popular sentiment remained resistant to foreign influences, and anger rose over the “unequal treaties”, which the weak Qing Empire could not resist. Concerns grew that missionaries and Chinese Christians could use this decline to their advantage, appropriating lands and property of unwilling Chinese peasants to give to the church. This

⁸ *Hansard*, H.C. Debate, vol.53, cols.707-708, 7 April 1840.

⁹ J.E. Hoare, *Embassies in the East* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999) pp. 17-30.

¹⁰ Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast*, pp. 267-285.

¹¹ L.K. Young, *British policy in China 1895-1902* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) pp. 100-108.

rise of nationalism which resulted in violent revolts against foreign interests worried Western powers. They fretted about the emergence of a new breed of Chinese, often called *fenqing*, or angry youth. The *fenqing* were dismissive of economic and political liberalism and scornful of the notion of universal rights.¹² From the European viewpoint the most dramatic episode in the uprising was the siege of the Beijing legations by the Boxers, which began on 20 June 1900 and lasted for fifty-five days. They declared war on all the powers in China at once and ordered the extermination of all foreigners. A divided West formed an extraordinary alliance to deal with this threat: British, German, Russian, American, Italian, French, Austro-Hungarian and even Japanese (playing their first role as honorary Westerners) troops, entered Beijing on 14 August to quash the uprising. China's capital city was under foreign occupation and the emperor and the Empress Dowager had fled to Xian leaving an uncertain future for the dynasty. In September 1901 China agreed to the Boxer Protocol which imposed punishments on the officials held to have colluded with the Boxers, required China to pay a huge monetary indemnity and conferred various military advantages on the West.

The Russo-Japanese War (1904 – 1905) grew out of the rival imperial ambitions of the Russian and Japanese Empires over Manchuria and Korea. The Russians sought a warm water port on the Pacific Ocean, for their navy as well as for maritime trade; Vladivostok was only operational during the summer season, but Port Arthur, a naval base in the Liaotung province leased to Russia by China, would be operational all year. The main areas of contention between the two powers were Southern Manchuria, specifically the area around the Liaodong Peninsula and Mukden, the Yellow Sea and the seas around Korea and Japan. After discussions broke down in 1904, the Japanese Navy attacked the Russian eastern fleet at Port Arthur. The Russians were poorly organised and the Japanese defeated them in a

¹² *The Economist*, 1905.

series of battles on land and at sea. The resulting campaigns, in which the Japanese military attained victory over the Russian forces arrayed against them, were unexpected by world observers. Japan had gained prestige due to its military aid in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion and with this victory over Russia, was now seen as a power in the international arena.

With the emergence of Japan the balance of power of the Asia area changed fundamentally and the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 reflected this fact. For Britain its primary object was to apply a check on Russia, in British eyes the traditional Asiatic menace. But in China it was naturally seen as an anti-Chinese alliance, imposing a permanent bias on British policy; and such a bias was visible for the next forty years, at first as a result of the Treaty and later, when it was not renewed, as a result of respect for Japanese military strength. Given the balance of power in the area it was not until the Japanese attack on the West in December 1941 that Britain was able to follow a more consistent and respectable policy with China finally in the position of wartime ally.¹³

The creation of the People's Republic of China

There was a short honeymoon period in relations between China and Britain during the Second World War but the accumulated resentments of the past century were not so easily dissipated. Britain was still considered by the Chinese to be an oppressive imperialist presence, visible in its string of Consulates and still ensconced in its original base, Hong Kong. The Chinese civil war succeeded the Anti-Japanese War and as the Communist armies swept south and consolidated their hold on the country it became clear that the Nationalist

¹³ P. Lowe, *Great Britain and the origins of the Pacific War: A study of Great British Foreign Policy in East Asia 1937-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

Government would be ousted to make way for a new regime.¹⁴ Sir Horace Seymour, Britain's ambassador in China from 1942 to 1946, played a significant role in the formation of Britain's China policy during these years.¹⁵ He was a realist and advised non-intervention in a "Wait and take note" policy whilst preparing Whitehall for the eventuality of a communist assumption of power.¹⁶

In December 1948, the British Cabinet considered "recent developments in the civil war in China".¹⁷ The report which followed represented the response of the British Government to the almost predictable Communist victory in China.¹⁸ The Foreign Office had studied the possible effects of the spread of communism in China on adjacent areas, Hong Kong, Japan, the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, foreign territories in South-East Asia, India, and Pakistan; concluding that communist activities in all these areas would be increased and contacts between communists in these countries would be further facilitated with the establishment of a communist China. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin believed that the threat of Chinese aggression in Hong Kong was remote and the status quo would be adhered to, the only change being then, the Colony "would be living on the edge of a volcano".¹⁹

¹⁴ *Documents on British Policy Overseas* [hereafter, *DBPO*], Series I, Vol. VIII 1945-1950 (London: WHP, 2002) pp. 220-222.

¹⁵ S. Li, 'Britain's China Policy and the Communists, 1942 to 1946: The Role of Ambassador Sir Horace Seymour', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No.1 (February, 1992), pp. 49-63.

¹⁶ R. Ovendale, 'Britain, the United States and the Recognition of Communist China', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1 (1983), pp. 139-158.

¹⁷ The National Archives, London [hereafter, TNA], CAB 129/31, CP(48)299, 9 December 1948.

¹⁸ *The Times*, 25 January 1945; D.C. Watt, 'Britain and the Cold War in the Far East, 1945-58' in Y. Nagai and A. Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York, 1977), pp. 89-123.

¹⁹ TNA, CAB 129/31, CP(48)299, 9 December 1948; See also M. Chi-Kwan, 'The 'Problem of People': British Colonials, Cold War Powers and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949-62', *Modern Asian Studies*, 41, 6 (2007) pp. 1145-1181.

The Cabinet placed more emphasis upon economic than political ramifications of the expected communist victory.²⁰ It was assumed that there would be an initial period before any stable administration could be effective there and when foreign commerce and business generally would be at a low ebb. Although it was further noted that

This could not, however, be a very much worse state of affairs than that existing in China at present, with the lack of easy and safe internal communications, extremely inflated prices, the restrictive attitude of the present National Government towards foreign trade, shipping and business, and the prevalent corruption.²¹

It was therefore anticipated that foreign trade had the opportunity to improve under a new, stable administration and so the Cabinet recommended a positive policy in China.

Our best hope probably lies in keeping a foot in the door. That is to say, provided there is not actual danger to life, we should endeavour to stay where we are, to have *de facto* relations with Chinese Communists in so far as these are unavoidable, and to investigate the possibilities of continued trade in China.²²

Or, as Winston Churchill neatly summed up, “The reason for having diplomatic relations is not to confer a compliment but to secure a convenience”.²³

The maintenance of law and order in Hong Kong was a primary goal for British policy makers and so they were shocked when, on 19 April 1949, the frigate HMS *Amethyst* came under Communist artillery fire as it sailed up the Yangtze River en route to Nanjing.²⁴

Although the ship was legally entitled to navigate the river, Communist radio broadcasts denounced the event as a naval attack by the British imperialist Navy. Furthermore the

²⁰ A. Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, vol. 1 (London, 1960), pp. 631-632.

²¹ TNA, CAB 129/31, CP(48)299, 9 December 1948; See also, D. Clayton, ‘British Foreign Economic Policy Towards China 1949-60’ in *Electronic Journal of International History* (Institute of Historical Research), Article 6.

²² TNA, CAB 129/31, CP(48)299, 9 December 1948; *De facto* literally translates as “of fact”, the term describes an existing or a holding of a specified position but not necessarily by legal right. It is often used in contrast with *de jure*, literally “of law”, where an existing or the holding of a specified position is by legal right.

²³ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb, 464, cols. 1260 and 1342, 5 May 1949; See also, D. Wolf, “To Secure a Convenience’: Britain recognises China 1950’, *Journal of contemporary History*, 18 (1983) pp. 299-326.

²⁴ *DBPO*, Series I, Vol. VIII 1945-1950, pp. 239-250.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) demanded an apology from the British and an admission that the *Amethyst* “intruded indiscreetly” into Communist water.²⁵ The *Amethyst* was held hostage until its escape to Shanghai on 30 July.

Although Communist aggression against Hong Kong was improbable, the spectre of Britain’s disastrous loss of the Colony to Japan in December 1941 pervaded most discussions of Hong Kong security.²⁶ After the *Amethyst* incident showed how uncompromising the Chinese Communists could be, Hong Kong’s value to the United Kingdom markedly increased. In Cabinet meetings subsequent to the *Amethyst* incident, Hong Kong was described as an “oasis of stability among the prevailing chaos on the China coast”.²⁷ Without Hong Kong, Britain saw no way to prevent Japan from acquiring a dominant position in the commerce in the Far East. However, perhaps more important than its role as a trading post or potential fortress, Hong Kong was a symbol of the viability of democracy in Asia.

Despite the *Amethyst* incident the Foreign Office recognised that if Britain was to retain its trade and influence in the Far East, good relations with China would be necessary.²⁸ The first step to this would be recognition.²⁹ Before any two states can enter into normal diplomatic

²⁵ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb, 464, col. 1225, 5 May 1949. On the *Amethyst* incident see M.H. Murfett, *Hostage on the Yangtze: Britain, China and the Amethyst Crisis of 1949* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991); E. Luard, *Britain and China* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962) pp. 67-73; and B. Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) pp. 26-27.

²⁶ TNA, CAB 134/287, Far East Committee (49)25, 16 May 1949.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *DBPO*, Series I, Vol. VIII 1945-1950, pp. 417-426.

²⁹ Recognition in the case of a new State, is the operation by which an existing State admits that the new State exists as a member of international society, and intimates readiness to enter into, or actually institutes, relations. In the case of a new or revolutionary government in an old State, recognition is the operation by which another State accepts that government as representing the old State in international intercourse, and continues or renews relations accordingly.

relations they need to recognise one another. A Foreign Office paper summed up British practice

Unlike many other states, it is the long established practice of Her Majesty's Government to treat the recognition of a regime which has come to power unconstitutionally as subject to a conscious act of recognition. Our criteria for recognition are that the regime should have effective control of much the greater part of the national territory and should enjoy the obedience of the mass of the population, with a reasonable prospect of permanence.³⁰

In a Parliamentary debate on 5 May 1949, the House began to consider the issue of recognition for the Communists.³¹ A conciliatory approach to Beijing could be seen as one element in a consistent British policy towards the Soviet Union.³² If at all possible, British policy makers believed that China should be made to appreciate the alternatives other than an alliance and trade pact with the Soviet Union.³³ In contrast to the later decision by the United States not to grant diplomatic recognition, the British observation of international formalities appears remarkably realistic, devoid of ideologically inspired misperceptions.³⁴ Britain regarded the new government first as Chinese and second as Communist; the view persisted that Chinese Communism was of a different species from Russian Communism.³⁵ Her longer-term goal, it was assumed, was not to dominate Asia. Rather it was to minimise and ultimately eradicate Western influence in the states on her immediate perimeter.³⁶

³⁰ TNA, FCO 9/2061, Minute, Goodison, 30 April 1974.

³¹ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 464, cols. 1224-349, 5 May 1949.

³² M. Dockrill, *British Foreign Policy 1945-56* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

³³ R. Ovendale, 'William Strang and the Permanent Under-Secretary's Committee', in J. Zametica (ed.), *British Officials and Foreign Policy 1945-50* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990).

³⁴ M.F. Hopkins, *Oliver Franks and the Truman Administration: Anglo-American Relations 1948-1952* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) pp. 144-147, 252.

³⁵ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb, vol. 464, cols. 1347-1348, 5 May 1949; See also L. Pye, *China: An Introduction* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1972) p. 2.

³⁶ J. Frankel, *British Foreign Policy 1945-1973* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) p. 154; See also, R.G. Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and perils* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); A. Lawrence, *China's Foreign Relations since 1949* (London: Routledge, 1975).

Literature

There have been surprisingly few studies covering Britain's post-war relationship with China. Perhaps this reflects its rather enigmatic position within the country's external relations. The attention of British Ministers and diplomats (and, therefore, subsequent scholars) was heavily focussed on more fluid issues demanding more urgent policy responses. These included the evolution of the relationship with the Americans; securing entry into the EEC; the subsequent search for enhanced political integration of the Community; and the withdrawal from East of Suez.

Edward Heath formed a strong bond with China during his term as Prime Minister. He stated in his autobiography *Course of My Life*, "I was determined from the outset that we would be among the first to have good relations with the Chinese".³⁷ Although his treatment of China is thin during his time of premiership, dedicating but a brief description of Britain's negotiations to exchange ambassadors but later he devotes a whole chapter to China entitled, "The Dragon Awakes" which focuses on his personal relationship with China which continued long after he left Office.³⁸ Just two years after leaving Office, Douglas-Home published his memoirs in October 1976.³⁹ Its tone is discreet, it does not disclose secrets of his ministerial career but he devotes a whole chapter of his book to China, reminding readers that during his many years spent at the Foreign Office, "I had visited many countries but it seemed that the door into China was firmly locked".⁴⁰ He emphasises China's interest in Britain's membership of the European Community, especially as a counterweight against Soviet aggression in Europe. Douglas-Home describes his trip to China in October 1972 as being primarily "to try to discover the real reasons which underlay the quarrel between

³⁷ E. Heath, *The Course of My Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998) p. 468.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 629-649.

³⁹ Home, *The Way the Wind Blows* (London: Collins, 1976).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

Communist China and Communist Russia” although this point of view is not backed up by the government documents.⁴¹ Both Heath and Douglas-Home credit the Americans for their role in opening up China to the West.⁴²

Heath and Douglas-Home, at the time, were perfectly aware of the country’s changed circumstances yet they still assumed that it was possible to sustain much of the status and influence of a great power. Britain’s decline was relative. A familiarity with all regions of the world, some excellent contacts and a shared heritage suggested that there would still be a distinctively British sphere of influence to be cultivated and exploited. Skilful diplomacy might, to some extent, compensate for reduced power.⁴³ Heath’s time as Prime Minister has been comprehensively covered by *The Heath Government 1970-1974: A Reappraisal* which comprises sixteen chapters by fifteen authors with each chapter apportioned its own theme.⁴⁴ Keith Sainsbury examined Douglas-Home’s performance as Foreign Secretary in *British Foreign Secretaries Since 1945* and D.R. Thorpe’s study, *Alec Douglas-Home* is based on Douglas-Home’s private papers at the Hirsel and examines the many events in which he was involved, including Munich, Suez, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Rhodesian rebellion, and the Conservative leadership struggles over 20 years.⁴⁵ The study provides a comprehensive portrait of a man who was described by Margaret Thatcher as representing “all that was best in his generation”.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, p. 269.

⁴² Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p.492; Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, p. 264.

⁴³ M. Dockrill and J.W. Young (eds.) *British Foreign Policy, 1945-56* (London, 1989) pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ S. Ball, *The Heath Government 1970-1974: A Reappraisal* (London: Longman, 1996).

⁴⁵ K. Sainsbury, P. Jones and A. Shlaim, *British Foreign Secretaries Since 1945* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1977); D.R. Thorpe, *Alec Douglas-Home* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996).

⁴⁶ D.R. Thorpe, *Alec Douglas-Home* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996) p. 463.

The question of whether the Heath government represented a clean break from the past, or an untidy one that contained the seeds of future confusion, has been flagged in the literature on Britain's post war foreign policy. F.S. Northedge has argued that it was at this point that British governments found that there really was "nowhere else to go except into the Europe of the six".⁴⁷ Joseph Frankel continues this theme. For three decades, the perceptions of British governments of their power and status had lagged behind the changing realities of their international situation. Under the Heath government, British foreign policy was at last taking a form more appropriate to a middle ranking state, whose interests were concentrated on its own immediate region of West Europe and whose domestic economy needed a supportive external policy, rather than the other way round.⁴⁸ Indeed the changing world indicated there should be a shift from unilateral to multilateral policy-making; a new agenda that gave more weight to economic dimensions with less weight to the cultivation of military power capabilities.⁴⁹

The secondary literature addressing the post-war Sino-British relationship is fairly limited. Aron Shai's *Britain and China 1941-47* looks at the relationship during and after the Second World War and argues that far from 1945 being an ideal ending date in this respect, extending the study up to 1947 gives a sense of the subsequent changes in leadership in Britain and China and so completes this review.⁵⁰ Brian Porter's *Britain and the Rise of Communist China: A study of British attitudes 1945-1954*, focuses on the Sino-British relationship and often takes the perspective of the relationship through the eyes of Britain's

⁴⁷ F.S. Northedge, *Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy, 1945-73* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974), p. 328.

⁴⁸ Frankel, *British Foreign Policy: 1945-73*, pp. 310-37.

⁴⁹ M. Smith, S. Smith and B. White (eds.), *British Foreign Policy* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 3-25.

⁵⁰ A. Shai, *Britain and China 1941-47* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

imperial decline.⁵¹ *Britain and China* by Evan Luard takes the story from recognition of Beijing to United Nations membership for Beijing.⁵² Luard joined the diplomatic service and was stationed in Beijing 1952-54 and later served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office from 1969-1970 and again from 1976 until Labour left power in 1979. He argues that Britain's response to China's initiatives show a profound understanding by British policy makers of China's growing importance in the world. With the aim of keeping a check on China, and preventing further threats against her from the offshore islands, Britain voted for the admission of the communists into the United Nations. Robert Boardman's monograph on *Britain and the People's Republic of China, 1949-1974* complements Luard's study.⁵³ Although no primary documents were used in the research the book gives a comprehensive review of the twists and turns of the relationship. K. Hamilton's article 'A week that Changed the world: Britain and Nixon's China Visit of 21-28 February 1972' published in the journal *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, provides an insight into the diplomacy leading up to the exchange of ambassadors in 1972 but does so when looking at Britain's reaction to Sino-American diplomacy in this year.⁵⁴

The period between 1974 and 1976 does not appear to have been covered by any published sources. Current literature tends to take up the Sino-British story from 1978 when Chinese President Deng Xiaoping launched a wide-ranging programme of economic and social

⁵¹ Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China: A study of British attitudes 1945-1954*; See also, Z. Qiang, *The Dragon, the Lion and the Eagle: British-American relations, 1949-1958* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994).

⁵² Luard, *Britain and China*.

⁵³ R. Boardman, *Britain and the People's Republic of China, 1949-1974* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

⁵⁴ K. Hamilton, 'A week that Changed the world: Britain and Nixon's China Visit of 21-28 February 1972', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Volume 15, Number 1, 2004, pp. 117-135.

reform, the “open door policy”, to develop China’s external relations.⁵⁵ This was also the time when Sino-British negotiations on the return of Hong Kong resumed.

The release in recent years of British government documents has enabled primary research on Britain’s China policy 1970-1976. This account of Britain’s China policy is primarily based on original sources, essentially British government papers from The National Archives in Kew; Foreign Office (FO), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Prime Ministerial (PREM) and Cabinet (CAB) material. The files of the Foreign Office are used extensively as this is a study on Britain’s foreign policy and how it was constructed. The private papers of Sir John Mansfield Addis, held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, have also been consulted. These are supplemented by memoirs, contemporary newspaper accounts and parliamentary exchanges. *The Foreign Relations of the United States* has been used to probe the American policy on China along side that of Britain.

Approach

In the period 1970 to 1976 there were solid achievements in the Sino-British relationship, particularly notable was the exchange of ambassadors in 1972. This study aims to reconstruct the sequence of events in Sino-British diplomacy from the beginning of the Heath government in June 1970 to 1976 when Mao died, heralding a new phase in Chinese policy to the world. It will aim to explain the process by which contacts were established. The focus is on the diplomatic exchanges and Ministerial visits which produced tangible positive results for the country, not least in its trading revenue with China. It also aims to contribute to the understanding of the processes by which British foreign policy was conceived and executed.

⁵⁵ T. Fishman, *China Inc., The Relentless Rise of the Next Great Superpower* (London: Scribner, 2005); J. Gittings, *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); W. Hutton, *The Writing on the Wall* (London: Little, Brown, 2007); S. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

It seeks to identify and explain the roles of the key individuals involved in these developments – both the civil servants and ministers; and the extent to which the two political parties put their individual stamp on the policy during their periods in office. Finally, it seeks to place Britain's policy to China in the broader context of Britain's foreign policy in the early 1970s.

The two British Prime Ministers in this period had the opportunity to set the tone for policy to China. They pursued distinctive paths. Edward Heath played an active part in the formation of Britain's China policy in 1971. He supported his colleagues in the Foreign Office and even enjoyed a good personal relationship with Chairman Mao. Harold Wilson acted rather differently, taking little interest in policy to China, something Mao recognised when he expressed his disappointment when Harold Wilson won the 1974 general election.

Structure

The study is arranged chronologically in five chapters. Chapter One considers Britain's approach towards China from recognition in 1950 until the election of Edward Heath in 1970. Chapter Two looks at Heath's government, the machinery of the Foreign Office and its approach towards China, from the accession to power of the Conservative party until the end of 1971. Chapter Three assesses the intensive diplomacy conducted by the Foreign Office in pursuit of improving relations between the two countries. Chapter Four covers the remainder of the Heath government, 1972 until February 1974, analysing the development of the Sino-British relationship through their interactions on bilateral affairs. Chapter Five considers Britain's relations with China during Harold Wilson's second term as Prime Minister in order to compare the strategy of the two governments. Finally a Conclusion seeks to round off the work.

Note on spelling

In this thesis Chinese names and places have been spelled in accordance with *Pinyin*, the Chinese phonetic alphabet. For the benefit of readers a list of names is given below in both *Pinyin* and their most common former spelling. Direct quotations and footnoted references to primary sources remain in the previous *Wade-Giles* system of romanising the Mandarin Chinese language. When citing Chinese names, the family name is normally given first, followed by the given name.

Place names

<u>Pinyin Spelling</u>	<u>Former Spelling</u>
Beijing	Peking
Beiping ⁵⁶	Peiping
Fuzhou	Foochow
Guandong	Kwantung
Guangzhou	Canton
Jiulong	Kowloon
Kaohsiung	Kao-hsiung
Nanjing	Nanking
Ningbo	Ning-bo
Shanghai	Shanghai
Wuhan	Wu-han
Xiamen	Hsia-men
Yichang	Ichang

⁵⁶ Following the success of the Kuomintang Northern Expedition, Nanjing was officially made the capital of the Republic of China in 1928, and on 28 June of that year, Beijing was renamed Beiping. When Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949, it had been decided the city would be renamed Beijing and that it would be the capital of the new government.

People's names

<u>Pinyin Spelling</u>	<u>Former Spelling</u>	<u>Role during this study</u>
Bei Xiangguo	Pei Hsiang-kuo	Minister for Foreign Trade.
Bei Shizhang	Pei Shin-chang	Director of the Chinese Academy of Science.
Chai Shufan	Ch'ai Shu-fan	Vice Minister for Foreign Trade 1973-1977.
Chen Yi	Chen I	Foreign Minister 1958-1972.
Deng Xiaoping	Teng Hsiao-ping	Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of China 1975-1982.
Dong Biwu	Tung Pi-wu	Acting Chairman of the PRC 1968-1975.
Hua Guofeng	Hua Kuo-feng	Premier of the PRC 1976-1980.
Han Xu	Han Hsu	Director of Protocol Department 1969-1973.
Ji Bengfei	Chi Peng-fei	Minister for Foreign Affairs 1972-1974.
Jiang Jieshi	Chiang Kai-shek	President of the Republic of China 1948-1975.
Li Xiannian	Li Hsien-nien	Deputy Vice Premier of the PRC.
Liu Shaoqi	Liu Shao-chi	Chairman of the PRC 1959-1968.
Luo Guibo	Lo Kuei-po	Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs 1957-1970.
Ma Renhui	Ma Jen-hui	Deputy Director-General of the Civil Aviation Authority of China (CAAC) 1969-1973. Director General of CAAC 1973-1975.
Mao Zedong	Mao Tse-tung	Chairman of the Communist Party of China 1943-1976.
Pei Jianzhang	P'ei Chien-tsang	Chargé d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy to Britain.
Qiao Guanhua	Chiao Kuan-hua	Foreign Minister 1974-1976.

Shen Guang	Shen Kuang	Vice Minister for Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications 1973-1981.
Song Zhiguang	Sung Chih-kuang	Chinese Ambassador to Britain 1972-1977.
Wang Yeqiu	Wang Yeh-ch'iu	Director of the Bureau of Historical Relic Administration 1973-1980.
Wang Dong	Wang Tung	Director of the Western and European Department 1972-1974.
Xu Yixin	Hsu I-Hsin	Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs 1966-1979.
Yao Yilin	Yao Yi-Lin	Vice Minister for Foreign Trade 1973-1977.
Zang Ru	Chang Ju	Ambassador Song's wife.
Zhang Wenjin	Chang Wen-chin	Director of the West European, American and Oceanic Bureau 1971-1972.
Zhong Fuxiang	Chung Fu-hsiang	Director of Telecommunications 1971-1973. Minister for Posts and Telecommunications 1973-1978.
Zhou Enlai	Chou En-lai	Premier of the PRC 1949-1976. Foreign Minister 1949-1958.
Zui Yanming	Tsui Yen-ming	Chinese student who defected to Britain 1974.

Chapter One: Britain and Communist China 1950-1970

This chapter examines Britain's political relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) from recognition in 1950 until 1970. The examination of a particular bilateral relationship always has to take into account its previous history and this is intended to be a survey of British views and attitudes towards China covering the flashpoints and watersheds in this fledgling relationship, over these two decades. The Foreign Office had a clear aim, to establish full diplomatic relations as soon as possible in order to protect Hong Kong, British commercial interests and also to offer China an alternative to her alliance with the Soviet Union. However, while many decisions were shaped by considerations of timing, these decisions also had to be measured against how they would impact on the Anglo-American special relationship.

The Communist victory and the Recognition Question

Three major considerations underlined Britain's policy to switch recognition from the Republic of China (ROC) to the People's Republic of China after Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party declared the independence on 1 October 1949.⁵⁷ Firstly, to protect British investments in the new People's Republic; secondly to engage the People's Republic in such a way as to dissuade it from getting too close to the Soviet Union and thirdly, to act in line with international law as understood within the British government.⁵⁸ Furthermore, to ignore the Communist state would leave Britain without means to protect the

⁵⁷ Z. Mao, 'Proclamation of the Central People's Government of the PRC', 1 October 1949. Mao expanded on his aspirations for the PRC in his opening address, 'The Chinese People have stood up!' at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 21 September 1949. See also, M. Deng, *Deng Xiaoping: My Father* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1995) p. 455.

⁵⁸ TNA, FO 371/94850, Letter, Cardo to Scarlett, 28 January 1949; TNA, FO 1110/194, Morrison, Background memorandum, 19 June 1949; TNA, FO 1110/195, Minute, Millar, 17 July 1949.

interests of its nationals in China and would deny itself the opportunity to influence the future course of events in the Far East.⁵⁹

Mao stated that his nation was willing to establish diplomatic relations with any foreign government which severed relations with the Nationalist Government in Taiwan. Whitehall reacted quickly to the news from Beijing.⁶⁰ On 5 October the British Consul in Beijing delivered a message to Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai stating,

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are carefully studying the situation resulting from the formation of the Central People's Government. Friendly and mutually advantageous relations, both commercial and political, have existed between Britain and China for many generations. It is hoped that these will continue in the future. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom therefore suggest that pending completion of their study of the situation, informal relations should be established between His Majesty's Consular Officers and the appropriate authorities in the territory under the control of the Central Peoples Government for the greater convenience of both Governments and promotion of trade between the two countries.⁶¹

No reply was received. This message was interpreted by Mao as Britain according recognition to the Communist Government as the *de facto* Government of the territories they controlled. It appeared that the Communists would be satisfied with nothing less than *de jure* recognition. The Communist Government appeared to be taking pains to make the least of its desire for recognition in a bid to detract foreign powers from attaching a bargaining price to diplomatic acceptance or perhaps China believed that silence on approaches by Western powers would demonstrate its independence in the world community.⁶² It did yield benefits in

⁵⁹ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 469 cols., 2203-338, 17 November 1949; See also, J.W. Young, *Twentieth Century Diplomacy: A case study of British practice 1963-76* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 198-225.

⁶⁰ For further discussion on the response of other countries to this call, see R. Owendale, 'Britain, The United States and the recognition of Communist China', *The Historical Journal* pp. 139-158; D.C. Wolf, 'To Secure a Convenience: Britain Recognises China – 1950', *Journal of Contemporary History*, pp.299-326.

⁶¹ TNA, FO 371/75820, Graham, Peking to Nanking, 5 October 1949.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Franklin's comments on a CCP official's denunciation of the Soviet Union, 12 November 1949.

regard to China's relationship with Britain however. On 24 October 1949 Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin presented the Cabinet with a position paper which recommended that *de jure* recognition be granted to the PRC at an early date.⁶³ It stressed that Britain, due to its greater interest in China than other nations, should not feel bound by the views of other powers on recognition. Still, it was hoped that a common agreement could be obtained with other Commonwealth countries.

We shall have to make up our minds in due course whether or not to recognise the Communist Government as the *de jure* Government of China, but before we do so we are committed to consultation with other Commonwealth countries, with the United States and with other friendly Powers. Since our interests in China are very much greater than those of the other Powers, we should not necessarily feel bound by the views of other Powers, but it is obviously desirable to obtain the largest measure of agreement possible and in particular the agreement of other Commonwealth countries.⁶⁴

In communications with these other world powers including America, Canada, Australia, India and South Africa it was explained by the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, that the decision by the Foreign Office to offer *de jure* recognition to China would

merely acknowledge the inescapable fact that the Chinese Communist Government is in effective control in China. This does not in the least lessen our determination to resist communism in South East Asia and elsewhere. What happens in China is China's business but what happens in the territories for which we are responsible is very much our business and we intend to stimulate resistance to communism with all the means at our disposal, and hope like-minded countries will do the same.⁶⁵

The Chinese Ambassador in London, who represented the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China in Taiwan, pleaded with Stafford Cripps, Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging him to challenge the Foreign Office on the "de-recognition" of his government and expressed the view that "he could not imagine that old Allies of China like ourselves [Britain]

⁶³ TNA, CAB 129/37, 24 October 1949.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 4, Tel. nos. 908, 1681, 507, 11571, Attlee, 16 December 1949.

would take such action which was tantamount to interference in their civil war on the communist side".⁶⁶

Following a consideration of the replies received from various governments and especially taking into account India's plans to recognise the People's Republic of China on 30 December, Ernest Bevin decided to notify the Chinese Communist Government of Britain's intention to accord *de jure* recognition on 6 January 1950.⁶⁷ On this day, the Chinese Communist Government would be informed that Britain had accordingly appointed John Hutchinson, who was then the officer in charge at the British Embassy in Nanjing, to be Chargé d'Affaires, pending the appointment of an Ambassador. Simultaneously, in London, the Chinese Ambassador would be informed that Britain no longer recognised the Nationalist government as the *de jure* government of China and recognition would be withdrawn from him as Ambassador. However, the British Consul in Taiwan would continue to maintain *de facto* relations with the local authorities there.⁶⁸

The announcement of the Great Britain's *de jure* recognition of the People's Republic of China came on 6 January 1950, following that of India (the first non-Communist country to recognise the PRC) on 30 December and Pakistan on 4 January. Ceylon and Norway recognised the People's Republic on the same day as the United Kingdom; Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Israel and Afghanistan acted within the next two weeks.⁶⁹ With the problem of recognition out of the way, the Foreign Office Far East Department concentrated its efforts upon the establishment of diplomatic relations with Communist China.

⁶⁶ Ibid., note, Sharp to Attlee, 22 December 1949.

⁶⁷ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 4, Letter, Bevin to Attlee, 23 December 1949.

⁶⁸ Ibid., briefing paper.

⁶⁹ Luard, *Britain and China*, p. 79.

Chinese Foreign Minister, Zhou Enlai, replied to Britain's recognition on 9 January stating

I hereby inform you that the Central People's Government of the Republic of China is willing to establish diplomatic relations with your government on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for the territory and accept Mr J.C. Hutchinson whom you have appointed as Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim* as the representative of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland sent to Peking to carry on negotiations on the question of establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries.⁷⁰

The wording in this Chinese interpretation of Hutchinson's status is significant. In effect, the Chinese government agreed to treat him as Chargé d'Affaires but they did not officially recognise him as such. In subsequent communications Hutchinson and his successors were not accorded diplomatic status, with the Chinese referring to them as 'Negotiating Officers'. It soon became clear that recognising the People's Republic as the *de jure* government of China would not yield immediate substantive benefits for Britain.⁷¹ Jung Chang and John Halliday have suggested that by shunning Western recognition, Mao's primary purpose was to show Stalin that the new China was committed to the Communist bloc.⁷² Nevertheless the Lord Chancellor, William Jowitt, confirmed the view of the government before the House of Lords on 7 March 1950, stating that by offering diplomatic recognition to Communist China, "we took the only sensible and indeed the inevitable course".⁷³

The Chinese seat at the United Nations

The most immediate diplomatic problem raised by the establishment of Communist China was that of Chinese representation at the United Nations (UN). The Republic of China was an

⁷⁰ *DBPO*, Series I, Vol. VIII 1945-1950, pp. 449-450.

⁷¹ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 474 col.598, 24 April 1950.

⁷² J. Chang and J. Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Vintage, 2007) p.424. It should be noted that this book has been strongly criticised by academics for the sources used, methodology and conclusions reached. This is the only reference to this book in this thesis.

⁷³ *Hansard*, H.L. Deb., vol. 166, cols. 90-91, 7 March 1950.

original member of the Organisation and had a permanent seat on the Security Council.⁷⁴ At the beginning of 1950 only a small minority of countries had recognised the People's Republic and so the Nationalist delegation continued to speak, vote and act in the name of China. Whether this situation should continue or Beijing be allowed to occupy the Chinese seat was strongly debated.⁷⁵ The British ruling Labour party stressed the opinion that the rise of Asia was an inevitable and irresistible process which it was wise to concur with, and foolish, as well as immoral to oppose.⁷⁶ Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin wrote

It is by no means the case that everything today in China is bad, and the attitude of the Chinese Government towards those powers which have accorded recognition, if aloof is not hostile. No major political move has so far been made by China to which serious exception could be taken, and though we must be on our guard I do not think we should seek to convict a man before he has committed a crime, since this will only create a sense of injustice which will lead us nowhere... If China continues to be excluded from the United Nations, and if the attitude of the West continues to be coldly hostile, must she not come to the conclusion, even when the moment arrives when she would like to move away from Moscow, that she has no other course but to maintain her association?⁷⁷

When, at the beginning of 1950, the Soviets first proposed that a Chinese Communist delegation should be admitted and the Nationalists expelled, the majority of the Security Council members, including the United States, voted against this motion.⁷⁸ Britain abstained from the vote. The People's Republic had attached conditions to the establishment of full diplomatic relations with Britain which included Britain's vote for their admission to the UN representing the China seat.⁷⁹ The reasoning behind abstention from voting was that it

In no way indicates approval of the Nationalist representation or opposition to the representation of the Central People's Government, nor has the abstention of His Majesty's Government in any way prejudiced the solution of the question ... His

⁷⁴ United Nations, 'Article 23, Chapter V', *The Charter of the United Nations* at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter5.shtml> accessed 03/01/10.

⁷⁵ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 475, cols. 2070-193, 24 May 1950; *The Times*, 12 January 1950; *The Times*, 21 March 1950.

⁷⁶ *Hansard*, H.L. Deb., vol. 169, cols. 1039-1060, 14 December 1950.

⁷⁷ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Tel. no. 3624, Bevin to Acheson, 11 August 1950.

⁷⁸ The Americans advocated strong support for Nationalist China, see *Time*, 13 April, 1959.

⁷⁹ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Tel. no. 763, FO to Beijing, 6 June 1950.

Majesty's Government desire to draw the attention of the Central People's Government to the steps which they have taken to persuade other members of the [Security] Council to cast their votes in favour of the admission of the Central People's Government's representatives and thus secure an early decision in that body.⁸⁰

The Foreign Office had instructed British delegations to vote in favour of the change-over in any United Nations bodies only if such a decision would command a majority, but otherwise to abstain. The view was held that the question of representation was one for a collective majority decision of the body concerned, and that its discussion was premature until a majority either had recognised the People's Republic or was, without recognising, prepared to vote in favour of the change-over.⁸¹ However in June 1950, Kenneth Younger, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, wrote to Prime Minister Attlee advising that at the upcoming session of the UN Security and Economic Council (ECOSOC), on 3 July, the British delegation should vote in favour of the admission of the People's Republic, irrespective of the number of affirmative votes cast as he explained

It would be most embarrassing if the representative of the People's Republic were to fail to get elected as a result of our abstention or to succeed in being admitted without our support.

Although he warned that other countries should not

Gain the impression that this modification in our voting tactics is an attempt to curry favour with them [the Chinese] ... We should take the line that the affirmative votes we have cast do not represent any change in our policy, but merely a logical and expected evolution of it.⁸²

This course of action was approved by both Foreign Secretary Bevin and the Prime Minister.⁸³ This strategy also seemed to reflect public opinion in Britain, a Gallup poll taken

⁸⁰ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Tel. no. 763, FO to Beijing, 6 June 1950; TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Letter, Bevin to Attlee, 15 June 1950. In March, Foreign Secretary Bevin had urged the Egyptian, Ecuadorean and Cuban Governments to end the deadlock by voting in favour of the change-over.

⁸¹ Ibid., Minute, Younger to Attlee, 12 June 1950.

⁸² Ibid., Minute, Younger to Attlee, 12 June 1950.

⁸³ Ibid., Letter, Bevin to Attlee, 15 June 1950.

in June revealed that sixty-one percent of people favoured Beijing's admission to the United Nations with only twenty percent against.⁸⁴

The War in Korea

In June 1950 the armies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Communist government controlling North Korea, invaded the south of the country, governed by the non-Communist Republic of Korea (ROK).⁸⁵ North Korea's leader, Kim Il-Sung, had planned the invasion and requested Moscow's support. Soviet Premier, Joseph Stalin, had sanctioned the attack and equipped the North Koreans.⁸⁶ The idea of 'losing' Korea to communism, so soon after China established a new regime, carried political ramifications across the world. American president Harry Truman, conscious of Korea's proximity to Japan, worried that if communists won control of the peninsula they would try to expand their reach through continued aggression.⁸⁷ The United States guided the passage, on 27 June, of a United Nations resolution calling upon its members to help South Korea: Resolution 83,

noted the appeal from the Republic of Korea to the United Nations for immediate and effective steps to secure peace and security [and] recommends that the members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be

⁸⁴ 'Chinese seat at U.N.: Hint of change in British attitude', *The Times*, 20 Jun, 1950, p. 4.

See also Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China*, p. 66.

⁸⁵ For an overview of the Korean War see, Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War*; B. Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2010); W. Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). For the role of the Soviet Bloc and China see, S. Goncharov, J. Lewis and L. Xue, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁸⁶ N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, translated and edited by S. Talbott, (London: Deutsch, 1974) pp.367-69.

⁸⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States* [Hereafter, *FRUS*], 1950, Vol. I China (Washington DC: USGPO, 1992), Tel., Kirk to Acheson, 25 June 1950, pp. 139-140; N. Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese American Relations and the Recognition Controversy 1949-1950* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), Tucker argues that the United States would have recognised China in 1950 if the Korean War had not intervened.

necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.⁸⁸

The attack on South Korea on 25 June materially altered Britain's voting situation. Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Kenneth Younger, noted that, "emotional public reactions both in the United States and in this country ... would make it extremely difficult for us to go on record for the first time next Monday as having voted for the admission of the Communist Government of China to a United Nations body" and advised the British delegation continue the policy which she had hitherto followed, to abstain on each body until a majority sufficient to bring about a change-over was available.⁸⁹

Prior to the attack on Korea, the United States Government had no objections to Britain voting affirmatively in the Economic and Social Council for the People's Republic while the American delegation continued to oppose seating Chinese Communist representation. However given the "encouragement and substantial support provided by that regime [PRC] to North Korean aggressors and its defiant and cynical disregard of action of Security Council to halt aggression in Korea ... In [the] opinion of United States Government, Security Council ought not to act on this matter at this time".⁹⁰ American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, firmly outlined his policy in the matter stating that, "Under present circumstances we are opposed to the seating of the Peiping regime in the United Nations and will urge our view in every appropriate way".⁹¹ British Foreign Secretary Bevin and Acheson both opposed any suggestion of an arrangement for settling the Korean matter in exchange for seating Beijing at the United Nations. They agreed that the representation issue would not be the cause for an

⁸⁸ United Nations, Resolution 83: *Complaint of Aggression upon the Republic of Korea*, 27 June 1950 at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1950/scres50.htm> accessed on 18 July 2011.

⁸⁹ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Minute, Younger to Attlee, 29 June 1950.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 2104, Strang to FO, 31 July 1950.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 2143, Franks to FO, 4 August 1950.

extension of Chinese action in the conflict nor that a concession to Beijing on that issue reduce or eliminate any aggressive intent in neighbouring parts of Asia.⁹²

On 1 October 1950, the first anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, United Nations troops crossed the 38th Parallel, the boundary separating North and South Korea. Chairman Mao had proposed this Chinese intervention, and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai was one of the few Chinese leaders who firmly supported him.⁹³ By 1951, there was a military stalemate on the Korean peninsula. Although Britain had never been as dramatically involved in the Korean War as the Americans (their military contribution had been much smaller, their casualties much fewer), the Chinese intervention undoubtedly brought a sense of urgency to London's stance on the admission of the People's Republic to the United Nations.⁹⁴ On 1 June, after consultation with the United States, Gladwyn Jebb, Britain's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, explained, on behalf of the British Government, its new position.⁹⁵ The Foreign Office was anxious not to imply to the Security Council that Britain's view as to the right of the Beijing Government to be recognised as the Government of China had changed, but after "offering her [the PRC] every opportunity to end the Korean fighting in an honourable manner ... we think that the question now raised [of seating the PRC in the UN] should be postponed for the time being".⁹⁶ Prime Minister Attlee later consolidated this position in the House of Commons stating, "as soon as aggression has

⁹² TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Tel no. 2143, Franks to FO, 4 August 1950.

⁹³ Chang, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, pp.437-441.

⁹⁴ Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China*, p.66.

⁹⁵ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Tel no. 579, Jebb to FO, 1 June 1951.

⁹⁶ TNA, PREM 8/1334, part 5, Tel no. 579, Jebb to FO, 1 June 1951. See also, *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 488, col. 979, 6 June 1951, H. Morrison; *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 488, cols. 159-60W.

been halted, China should take her rightful place on the Security Council ... She is entitled to be one of the Big Five and I do not think that her place should be denied to her".⁹⁷

The Korean War armistice agreement signed at Panmunjom on 27 July 1953, essentially confirmed the partition of Korea based on the battlefront of July 1951. The total casualties of this war without victory totalled four million.

The Geneva Conference and SEATO

During the latter part of 1953 and early 1954, the Communist world launched a peace initiative. On 28 September 1953, the Soviet Union sent a proposal to the United States, France and Britain, calling for a five power conference (including China) to examine ways of reducing international tensions. On 9 January 1954, Zhou Enlai urged that the problems in Asia had developed to a stage where they had to be examined and solved through consultations between the powers that were involved. An international meeting was thus convened at Geneva. The purpose of the Geneva Conference, which lasted three months from 26 April until 20 July 1954, was to attempt to find a way to unify Korea and also discuss the possibility of restoring peace in Indochina which had been engaged in an eight year war pitching the French backed Vietnamese National Army against the Communist Viet Minh.

The Soviet Union, the United States, France, Britain, and the People's Republic of China were the major participants throughout the conference in Switzerland, while different countries concerned with these two subjects were also represented during the discussion of their respective questions. Beijing attached great importance to the conference and were intent on having "fruitful" discussions with their Western counterparts. Negotiations on the

⁹⁷ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 515, col. 1067, 12 May 1953.

Korean question ended without adopting any declarations or proposals largely because the contending sides had different views about the role of the United Nations in the political settlement of the dispute. The status quo would thus remain with a Communist state of North Korea and a democratic South Korea. On Indochina, the conference produced the Geneva Accords. These agreements separated Vietnam into two zones, a northern zone to be governed by the Viet Minh, and a southern zone to be governed by the State of Vietnam, headed by former emperor Bao Dại. The country was to be neutralised and neither side was to enter a military alliance. Elections were to be held in July 1956.

The Geneva conference, though, marked an improvement in Sino-British relations. Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai and Anthony Eden (who had become Foreign Secretary in October 1951) exchanged several visits over the course of the conference during which they discussed bilateral relations.⁹⁸ In their meeting on 2 June, Eden raised the question of the Chinese treatment of Humphrey Trevelyan, the British Chargé d’Affaires in Beijing. He told Zhou, “Britain does recognise China. However, China does not recognise us”. Zhou countered, “It is not China which does not recognise Britain. It is Britain which does not recognise us in the United Nations”.⁹⁹ Eden asked that Trevelyan be given the usual diplomatic courtesies and privileges and be allowed to meet appropriate Chinese officials.¹⁰⁰ Zhou promised that he would take care of this. Before Geneva the Chinese government had only recognised Trevelyan as the “head of the British delegation for negotiations of the establishment of diplomatic relations”. After the conference diplomatic relations were

⁹⁸ Q. Zhai, ‘China and the Geneva Conference of 1954’, in *The China Quarterly*, 129, (March 1992), pp. 103-122. For more on the Geneva Conference see: K. Ruane, ‘Anthony Eden, British Diplomacy and the Origins of the Geneva Conference 1954’ in *The Historical Journal*, 37, 1, (March, 1994), pp. 153-172; J.Y. Ra, ‘The Politics of the Conference: The Political Conference on Korea in Geneva, 26 April – 15 June 1954’ in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34, 3, (July, 1999), pp. 399-416.

⁹⁹ CWIHP, Tel. Enlai to Mao, 1 May 1954.

¹⁰⁰ A. Eden, *Full Circle* (London: Cassell, 1960), p. 138.

established between China and Britain at the level of Chargé d’Affaires. Beijing recognised Trevelyan’s status as British Chargé and agreed to send a Chinese Chargé to London.¹⁰¹

Although the Chinese involvement in the wars in Korea and Indochina had not affected the direction of Britain’s China policy, it had applied pressure to it. Similar to the Soviet Union, Beijing had proved able and willing to intervene, directly or indirectly, on behalf of Communist movements in neighbouring Asian states. Owing to her interests there, Britain initiated the establishment of a security alliance in South and South East Asia to contain possible Chinese direct military action or infiltration in Commonwealth countries in the region. Supported by the United States, Britain co-founded the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in September 1954.¹⁰² The United States did not deviate from the opinion that the conception of SEATO was aimed very directly against the Chinese threat in Asia, but Britain objected to the specific mention of “Communist” aggression in the drafts of the Treaty. Britain’s “active support of the US South-East Asian aggressive bloc”, along with Britain following the American lead in preventing China from attaining her coveted status in the United Nations, placed yet another obstacle in the way of an improvement in Sino-British relations.¹⁰³

Offshore attacks

The dispute between the United States and the People’s Republic of China over several small offshore islands held by the Chinese Nationalist government on Taiwan presented an intense

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, 18 June 1955.

¹⁰² Most of the SEATO member states were countries located elsewhere but with an interest in the region or the organisation. Members in September 1954 were: United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan. A. Hall, ‘Anglo-US Relations in the Formation of SEATO’, *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 5, 1, (Winter, 2005) pp. 113-132.

¹⁰³ Boardman, *Britain and the People’s Republic of China 1949-1974*, p. 72.

confrontation in the early stages of the Cold War. In late 1954 and early 1955, the People's Republic massed a huge military force in the Taiwan Strait, attacking the offshore islands, Quemoy and Matsu, held by the Republic of China. However, these attacks, coupled with the events of the Geneva and SEATO negotiations brought to a head the latent clash of China policies of Britain and America. Washington came to believe that it was the beginning of Beijing's military attempt to invade the ROC territories with the offshore islands first, and the next targets being Taiwan and Penghu; American President Eisenhower threatened retaliation by nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁴ Mao then backed down. British foreign policy makers saw this offshore incident as a continuation of the Chinese civil war. It was made clear in Parliament that Britain saw the offshore islands as PRC territory.¹⁰⁵ The only distinction that counted, in the British view, was between Taiwan itself and the islands off the main coast of China. Also, Britain saw an opportunity to encourage and assist in establishing the groundwork for a new Sino-American dialogue.¹⁰⁶ This was accomplished in July 1955 when the US State Department announced that talks at ambassadorial level between the two countries would commence on 1 August 1955.¹⁰⁷ Welcoming the announcement, the Foreign Office expressed the hope "that this fresh contact on practical matters will assist towards the alleviation of tension between China and the United States. We are glad to have acted as intermediaries".¹⁰⁸

A further crisis in 1958 witnessed a similar sequence in events. Chinese Communist units commenced shelling of the Nationalist-held islands again in the August and September. London attempted to stick to its view that the small islands, Quemoy and Matsu in particular,

¹⁰⁴ Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 309. Eden said, "No great power could want to fight" about the offshore islands, but they "could be a cause of war just the same".

¹⁰⁵ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 536, cols. 159-60W., 4 February 1955; *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 536, cols., 1533-8, 7 February 1955; *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 548, cols. 2358-9, 15 February 1956.

¹⁰⁶ H. Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune, 1945-1955*, (London: Macmillan, 1969) p. 613.

¹⁰⁷ *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. II, China, pp. 678-689.

¹⁰⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1955.

properly belonged to Communist China and anything contrary to this view constituted a perennial threat to world peace but after the trauma of the Suez crisis, where Britain had deviated from the American line, Britain was far less inclined to depart from the United States direction.¹⁰⁹ As the United States continued to recognise the Republic of China government located on Taiwan as the legitimate government of China and maintained diplomatic relations only with the Republic of China, the Americans had been arming Nationalist forces since the previous attacks, aiming to preserve the rule of the ROC in Taiwan. Again Eisenhower warned that the United States would not retreat “in the face of armed aggression”. The unexpectedly forceful American response surprised Chinese and Soviet leaders and on 6 September 1958 Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai proposed a resumption of ambassadorial-level talks with the United States in order to arrange a conclusion of the crisis.¹¹⁰

The Great Leap Forward

Between 1958 and 1962, in an attempt to catch up with and over take Britain (still considered a major industrial power) “in less than fifteen years”, Mao started to push a new domestic policy in China towards what became the Great Leap Forward.¹¹¹ According to Mao the final goal of his revolution was the transformation of China’s old state and society and the reassertion of China’s central position in world affairs; the aims were thus both economic and ideological. The Communist seizure of power was only the first step in the Long March of the Chinese revolution; Mao warned his comrades that if the revolution was not constantly pushed forward it would lose momentum. This Chinese policy of “permanent revolution” was

¹⁰⁹ V.S. Kaufman, *Confronting Communism: US and British Policies towards China* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001) pp. 123-146.

¹¹⁰ *FRUS* 1958-1960, vol. XIX, China, pp. 142-143.

¹¹¹ J. Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 189.

not, however, so distinct from the rest of the Communist world. Collectivisation was pursued with renewed vigour throughout Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Moldova and Yugoslavia during these years.¹¹²

Mao wanted China to become a leading world power, however, instead of following the Soviet model of development which leaned heavily towards industry alone, China would “walk on two legs”. The peasant masses were mobilised to transform agriculture and industry at the same time.¹¹³ The rural society was to keep pace with the dream by producing enough food to feed the country plus enough for export to help pay for industrialisation. Slogans written everywhere proclaimed, “Quicker, Faster, Better” and “We’re going to overtake Britain in no time in the production of steel”.¹¹⁴ Undernourishment and overwork quickly reduced tens of millions of peasants to a state where they were simply too weak to work, though added to this was the systematic violence and terror which formed the foundation of the Great Leap Forward. Through his extensive research, Frank Dikötter has calculated that at least 45 million people died unnecessarily during this four year period.¹¹⁵

In May 1951 the United Nations had imposed an embargo on strategic imports to China after the United States had branded the People’s Republic an aggressor state in the Korean War. Since then, most of China’s military and economic assistance had come from the Soviet Union but in the pursuit of the best equipment to power its way to communism, Beijing

¹¹² G. Swain and N. Swain, *Eastern Europe Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 146.

¹¹³ F. Dikötter, *Mao’s Great Famine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

¹¹⁴ Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge, British Diplomatic Oral History Programme [hereafter BDOHP], Interview with Sir Percy Cradock.

¹¹⁵ Dikötter, *Mao’s Great Famine*, p. xii.

dramatically changed the structure of foreign trade with an overture to Western Europe, made possible by the gradual collapse of the embargo imposed by the United States.

In November 1949, the United States, Britain, France, Italy, the Benelux countries and Denmark, worked closely together to form a Co-ordinating Committee (CoCom) which would be staffed by technical experts to scrutinise Western trade with the Soviet bloc. The group divided exports for control in East–West trade into three categories, each of which contained a list of items to be placed under embargo. In the spirit of unity each nation agreed unanimously to institute controls on the items specified in the three international lists which included military and strategic exports. However, the United States and Britain (supported by France) came into conflict over exports to China in early 1950.¹¹⁶ The principal point of contention between the United States and its CoCom partners was the control of items classed as “semistrategic”.¹¹⁷ These items consisted of industrial exports such as machine tools, diesel, ball bearings, iron and steel. The American delegation argued that all major industrial commodities could be construed as contributing to Soviet military production: the embargo should therefore be extended to all dual-purpose items. By contrast, the British delegation stated that the embargo should be limited to materials of a strictly strategic nature, as industrial commodities would not contribute substantially to Soviet military production, they should be traded freely with Eastern Europe.

Britain was keen to enter China’s huge market and vigorously campaigned to eliminate the system of export controls from 1956 onwards. Industrial purchases from Britain more than

¹¹⁶ F.M. Cain, ‘Exporting the Cold War: British responses to the USA’s establishment of CoCom 1947-1951’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jul., 1994), pp. 501-522.

¹¹⁷ I. Jackson, *The Economic Cold War: America, Britain and East-West trade 1948-63* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) pp. 43-57.

doubled from £12 million in 1957 to £27 million in 1958 and then £24 million in 1959.¹¹⁸ Diplomatically though, the period of the Great Leap Forward resulted in a marked element of stasis in British policy making towards the Chinese leadership, there was little room for British initiative. The belief persisted throughout that Asia's affairs could never be settled satisfactorily until China's isolation ended but during this period the structure of the Sino-British relationship was an unchanging reality of Britain's external relations rather than a subject for active policy making. By the end of the 1950s, a full circle seemed to have been drawn from the beginning to the end of the decade; following the Great Leap Forward, China was internationally isolated and internally devastated.

The Sino-Soviet split

When Josef Stalin and Mao Zedong concluded a Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance in 1950, the agreement triggered deep apprehension in the West, but also aroused intense speculation over how long the accord between the two communist giants would last.¹¹⁹ It was always the view in Whitehall that the roots of Chinese Communism were so firmly implanted in Chinese conditions and history that long-term collaboration with the Soviet Union seemed impossible. Indeed, while Mao did firmly bind his regime to the Soviet Union, he avoided Russian control over the essence of Chinese national power and developed an individual foreign policy.¹²⁰ Theoretically the 1950 Treaty was limited to cover aggression by Japan and States allied with it, but on a number of occasions the Soviet leaders interpreted it as applying to any aggression against China and declared their readiness to go to her aid;

¹¹⁸ Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine*, pp. 73-75.

¹¹⁹ TNA, PREM 13/2958, Record of conversation between Douglas-Home and de Gaulle, 2 April, 1964; S. Radchenko, 'The Sino-Soviet split' in O.A. Westad, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume II, Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 349-372.

¹²⁰ S. Dai, 'Peking's International Position and the Cold War' in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 321, (January 1959), pp. 112-121.

but they also showed caution. For example, in 1958 during the Taiwan Straits crisis, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev refrained from committing the Soviet Union to the defence of China until it was clear that actions would not be necessary.

The Soviet Union ... has everything necessary to administer a crushing rebuff to anyone who would encroach on the security of the Soviet Union or its friends and allies. But no incantations from Peking will draw the Soviet Union to the road of madness, the road of irresponsible playing with the lives of hundreds of millions of people.¹²¹

Although, in a joint communiqué issued on 3 August 1958, Mao and Khrushchev declared that they were in full agreement on the importance of maintaining Sino-Soviet cooperation not only to “strengthen the solidarity of the socialist camp,” but also to consolidate their ties with “all other peace-loving countries and peoples”, fissures began to appear in the monolith of Sino-Soviet unity.¹²² Beijing had kept Moscow in the dark about her tactics during the offshore crises which violated the letter and spirit of the Sino-Soviet 1950 alliance treaty. This was perhaps in large part due to Mao’s competitive rivalry against the post-Stalin Kremlin leadership for it seemed that the Chinese premier had come to acquire greater self-confidence with the death of Stalin.¹²³ In the course of a year, simmering tensions, ranging from Khrushchev’s anxieties regarding Chinese belligerence on both Eastern and Western borders, to Mao’s anger over what he saw as the Kremlin’s unwarranted new intimacy with their American enemy and his own domestic opposition, escalated pressures. Mao began to wage a hostile propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union. A political struggle was being conducted with the Chinese urging the Soviet people to overthrow the existing order and raise the standard of Mao’s ideas. The Soviets saw this as a campaign to sharpen relations to the point of a break and to provoke the Soviet Union into making the break so as to deceive

¹²¹ TNA, PREM 13/2958, Soviet Government statement, 21 August 1963.

¹²² *The New York Times*, 4 August 1958.

¹²³ O.A. Westad, (ed.), *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1945-1963* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

people into believing that it is responsible for the deterioration in relations.¹²⁴ A report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, presented to the Cabinet on 22 August 1967, stated that,

The Sino-Soviet dispute has reached a stage where, in the absence of some overriding external danger, no reconciliation can be foreseen ... Neither side has formally denounced the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance, but the Chinese are unlikely now to place much reliance on Soviet military aid, and the Soviet Union certainly desires to avoid being involved by China in a war with the United States.¹²⁵

With the Western world in favour of a possible rapprochement with the People's Republic political contacts became increasingly frequent. British policy makers appeared to have been correct in their predictions, the Sino-Soviet split finally persuaded Beijing of the virtues of a European connection.¹²⁶

The Cultural Revolution

The Chinese Cultural Revolution was launched in May 1966. Set into motion by Mao Zedong, its stated goal was to enforce socialism in the country by removing capitalist, traditional and cultural elements from Chinese society, and to impose Maoist orthodoxy within the Party. Mao alleged that bourgeois elements were entering the government and society at large, aiming to restore capitalism. He insisted that these "revisionists" be removed through a violent class struggle. China's youth responded to Mao's appeal by forming Red Guard groups around the country. The movement then spread into the military, urban workers, and the Communist Party leadership itself, resulting in widespread factional struggles in all walks of life. In the top echelons of leadership, Mao led a mass purge of senior officials who were accused of deviating from the socialist path, most notably Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Concurrently, Mao's personality cult grew to immense proportions. In October 1966, Mao's *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, which was

¹²⁴ TNA, PREM 13/2958, Tel. no. 225, Harrison to FO, 16 February 1967.

¹²⁵ Ibid., Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, 22 August 1967.

¹²⁶ P. Roberts, (ed.), *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

known as the “Little Red Book” was published.¹²⁷ Party members were encouraged to carry a copy with them and possession was almost mandatory as a criterion for membership. Over the years, Mao's image became displayed almost everywhere, present in homes, offices and shops. His quotations were typographically emphasized by putting them in boldface or red type in even the most obscure writings. Music from the period emphasized Mao's stature, as did children's rhymes. The phrase “Long Live Chairman Mao for ten thousand years” was echoed continuously throughout the country.

During the radical phase of the Cultural Revolution, China's violation of the diplomatic norms of the international community reached an unprecedented level. Between June 1966 and August 1967, eleven Missions in Beijing had experienced the fury of Chinese demonstrations. The revisionist countries: the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Mongolia and Czechoslovakia; the imperialists: Britain and France; the reactionaries: Indonesia, India and Burma; and an unclassified Italy had all faced the wrath. On 20 August 1967, British Chargé d’Affaires, Donald Hopson, was summoned to the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Xu Yixin, Head of the West European Department, passed on a message. Within forty-eight hours the British had to cancel the ban on three patriotic newspapers in Hong Kong, declare innocent and set free nineteen patriotic Chinese journalists there and call off the lawsuits pending against two Hong Kong newspapers and two printing firms, “otherwise they would be answerable for the consequences”.¹²⁸ Given the legal processes in Hong Kong, it was impossible that Hopson or his staff in Beijing could do anything about this situation. On 22 August, Hopson and Percy Cradock, Head of the Chancery, attended a meeting at the British Mission arranged by their Chinese staff. The meeting was violent, ending in a siege situation; the exits were blocked by Chinese staff, effectively leaving twenty-three people, eighteen

¹²⁷ Z. Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1968).

¹²⁸ P. Cradock, *Experiences of China* (London: John Murray, 1994) pp. 61-62.

men, and five women (four secretaries and one wife) *de facto* hostages of their host government.¹²⁹ That night the Mission was ransacked and burned to the ground. Cradock was severely beaten, as were other members of the office though there were no fatalities. The next day, The New China News Agency recorded that

Over ten thousand Red Guards and revolutionary masses surged to the Office of the British Chargé d’Affaires in a mighty demonstration against the British imperialists’ frantic fascist persecution of patriotic Chinese in Hong Kong ... The enraged demonstrators took strong action against the British Chargé d’Affaires’ Office.¹³⁰

In September 1967 the British Consulate-General in Shanghai was requisitioned by the Chinese authorities. The British government reserved her rights to the property involved and to compensation for any loss or damage incurred. The Chinese Government decreed further sanctions against the British; no personnel of the British Office was to leave China without permission. All exit visas were cancelled and British activities were to be confined to their Office and residences and the road between the two. An application forty-eight hours in advance would be required for any attempt to move outside that area. They were effectively under house arrest. The situation was difficult but the staff at the Mission were able to destroy any sensitive documents before moving the Office to the spacious apartment of Ray Whitney, one of the staff, where they continued in their diplomatic efforts. Cradock urged the British government to undertake quiet diplomacy as opposed to extreme retaliation such as a rupture of diplomatic relations and economic sanctions.

One such high profile case where careful negotiation was needed was regarding the detained British Reuters correspondent, Anthony Grey. He had arrived in China in March 1967 to report on the Cultural Revolution. On 19 July, Grey was called to the Chinese Foreign Ministry and was not seen again for two years. Public Security men drove him back to his

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

¹³⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.66.

house and placed him under house arrest.¹³¹ In an attempt to justify the detention of Anthony Grey, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced, on 22 July 1967, that,

In view of the Hong Kong British authorities' unreasonable persecution of the correspondents of the Hong Kong branch of the New China News Agency and other patriotic newsmen, the Chinese Government has decide to limit the freedom of movement of the British Reuters' correspondent in Beijing.¹³²

Grey's detention followed the arrest of eight communist journalists in Hong Kong. Three of these were employees of the New China News Agency (NCNA). Seven of these eight, including two NCNA men were fined HK\$50 on 5 August 1968 and released. The remaining man, Hsueh Ping was released with full remission on 16 November 1968. Therefore, by December 1968, all the communist newspaper workers covered by the statement of July 1967 had been released. However, after Grey's detention, thirteen various communist newspaper workers were arrested and subsequently convicted for offences in connection with the troubles. Of those men, after completing their sentences but allowing the full remission of one third of their sentence for good behaviour, one was due out in early 1969, eleven were due out in September 1969 and one not due out until 1971.¹³³ This all added to the intractable problem to those in the Foreign Office who were trying to retain some sense in the relations between the British and Chinese governments.

As a result of the sacking of Britain's Mission in Beijing and the imposing of restrictions on the movement of British staff in Beijing, the Foreign Office imposed restrictions on members of the Chinese Mission in London in August 1968. They were forbidden to travel more than five miles from Central London without advance notification and required to have an exit permit to leave the country. These restrictions were enforced by police surveillance and were

¹³¹ A. Grey, *Hostage in Peking* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson) pp. 28-29 and pp. 78-98.

¹³² TNA, PREM 13/2523, Day to Palliser, 10 December 1968.

¹³³ TNA, PREM 13/2523, Brighty to Palliser, 23 December 1968.

in reaction to the limits placed on the movements of members of the British Mission in Beijing. On 20 October the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated to the British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, Donald Hopson, that there would be no easing of the Chinese restrictions until Britain had lifted the restrictions in London.¹³⁴ Completely disregarding the sacking of the British Mission, the Chinese argued that since Britain was the first to impose additional restrictions, she must also be the first to relax them. Hopson advised the Prime Minister that the Chinese would not budge from this position but that, if London were to decide on a unilateral and substantial relaxation and give the Chinese advance notification, it was likely that the Chinese would respond with action on their part. He argued that these sanctions against the Chinese were not of such severity and effectiveness as to force a change of Chinese policy and while the Chinese staff in London may be able to sit this episode out indefinitely, the Mission in Beijing could not. One of the wives in the Mission had already had a severe breakdown and been refused an exit permit. Moreover, as long as this situation existed, Britain could not hope to progress towards more normal dealings with the Chinese on trade. The best hope of settling other outstanding issues with the Chinese, such as the detention of Anthony Grey, lay in the general improvement of atmosphere which a mutual relaxation of restrictions might bring about. Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, approved the relaxation of travel restrictions, returning to their pre-August 1966, thirty-five-mile travel limit.¹³⁵

On 27 November 1967, British Chargé d'Affaires, Donald Hopson, was summoned by Hsueh, the Deputy Director of Western Europe Department, who informed him that as of 29 November, all restrictions on movement on staff of the British mission in Beijing would be

¹³⁴ TNA, PREM 13/3180, Minute, Brown to Wilson, 7 November 1967.

¹³⁵ TNA, PREM 13/1380, Letter, Day to Far Eastern Department, 8 November 1967.

removed.¹³⁶ Hsueh went on to inform Hopson that the root cause of the abnormal state of Sino-British relations was the suppressed Chinese citizens in Hong Kong and that until this stopped and the British Government accepted the Chinese Government's demands and released all prisoners, there could be no improvement or normalisation of relations.¹³⁷

Hong Kong

Although Hong Kong was Britain's only direct frontier with the Communist world, the Colony had rarely intruded into foreign relations between the People's Republic and Britain. Hong Kong was no longer of strategic importance to Britain but it had symbolic and political importance. China could cut off food and water supplies to Hong Kong at any time, thus strangling trade, making the British presence there untenable. However, from Mao's point of view, Hong Kong was China's biggest source of hard currency and a vital channel for acquiring technology and equipment from the West, which fell under strict United States embargo.

The Soviet Union made propaganda capital out of China's continued acquiescence in the existence of the colonies of both Hong Kong and Portuguese Macao on her former territory. The Chinese were unwilling to disturb the position for various reasons, including the risk of a clash with the United States and the important economic advantages which they derive, particularly from Hong Kong. In a reply to a jibe from Khrushchev in March 1963, Mao stated the official attitude that Hong Kong and Macao were outstanding issues from the past

¹³⁶ Ibid., Tel. no. 269, Hopson to FO, 27 November 1967.

¹³⁷ Ibid., Tel. no. 269, Hopson to FO, 27 November 1967; Ibid., Tel. no.305, FO to Hong Kong, 30 November 1967.

which “when conditions are ripe ... should be settled peacefully through negotiation and that, pending a settlement, the status quo should be maintained”.¹³⁸

During the Cultural Revolution, Communist demonstrations on Kowloon erupted into riots which subsequently spread to the main Hong Kong island. Prime Minister Harold Wilson reviewed the situation and the repercussions of the violence. Wilson held a meeting with the Governor of Hong Kong, David Trench, on 21 September 1967 to discuss the situation. Trench urged that the key to Britain’s ability to hold the situation in Hong Kong stable during the upheaval on mainland China was to take positive steps to maintain confidence in Hong Kong including confidence in Britain’s intentions towards, and support for, the Colony. The Prime Minister agreed that if the situation in Hong Kong deteriorated to the extent that the Hong Kong Government ceased to be able to maintain law and order, an emergency evacuation would have to be carried out of those who would be in particular danger of Communist retaliation. If, however, it became clear beyond any reasonable doubt either that Britain was heading for a situation in which Britain could no longer maintain control in Hong Kong, or that the mainland Chinese authorities firmly intended to establish effective authority in Hong Kong and were prepared to take any steps necessary to this end, including armed invasion, at that point Britain would evacuate Hong Kong at the earliest possible moment.¹³⁹ It was estimated that it would be possible to evacuate 2000 people, mainly Chinese, in the event of an emergency situation. The Government’s overall objective, however, was to “weather the storm with a view to seeking favourable opportunity to open negotiations with a stable Government of China about the future of Hong Kong,” it was then noted that this, “could take several years”.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ TNA, PREM 13/2958, Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, 22 August 1967, p.12.

¹³⁹ TNA, PREM 13/1380, Contingency Plan for Hong Kong, 20 December 1967.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Minute, Hong Kong Department, 21 September 1967.

In a statement to Luo Guibo, the Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, the British Government made clear that

A stable and prosperous Hong Kong is in the interests of all parties concerned: and its stability and prosperity depend on the maintenance of an orderly and peaceful society ... It has been the consistent policy of the British Government to ensure that all sections of the Hong Kong community enjoy the right to live and work freely within the normal framework of law and order. The British Government do not favour, discriminate against, or persecute any section of Hong Kong society and they recognise the right of all Hong Kong residents to freedom of expression within the law. This includes the personal right to study the works of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and the right to engage in activities associated with this study ... the British Government do not share Chinese views that in the absence of a settlement of differences over Hong Kong other problems in Sino-British relations cannot in the meantime be profitably discussed. On the contrary, the British Government believe that failure to approach other questions in a constructive spirit can only obstruct fruitful consideration of present difficulties in Hong Kong ... the British Government reaffirm their interest in and sincere desire for a full normalisation of Sino-British relations. They are of the opinion that this can be achieved by goodwill and good faith. Failure to achieve it can only be to the loss of all parties concerned.¹⁴¹

Improving Sino-British relations

On 20 September 1968 Percy Cradock, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, wrote to the Far Eastern Department to enquire whether a message would be sent by the Prime Minister to the Chinese Government on the anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. This had been standard practice in previous years but after the British Mission was burned down in August 1967 no official message of greetings was sent that year. "On the one hand", Cradock wrote, "there is the bad state of relations and continuing maltreatment of British subjects; on the other; slight but distinct improvement over the last few months, e.g. in treatment of this Mission and our expressed wish to restore correct relations".¹⁴² David Brighty expressed the Foreign Office view that sending a message from the Prime Minister to the Chinese Government would represent "more than minimum courtesies and was not justified ... a

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Tel no. 356, Far Eastern Department to Beijing, 11 April 1968.

¹⁴² TNA, PREM 13/2524, Letter, Cradock to Far Eastern Department, 20 September 1968.

message from the Prime Minister would suggest a degree of improvement in Sino-British relations which is still far from having been achieved".¹⁴³ However, a message to the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, was sent by British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, as a mark of improving relations with that particular Department.

October 1969 marked the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic and John Denson, having taken over from Percy Cradock as British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, wrote to the Foreign Office urging that a cordial message be sent to China. He declared that "this is an important anniversary and we have professed our desire to improve relations".¹⁴⁴ Denson believed that there had been some improvement in bilateral affairs in the last year and that even if the Chinese did not attach particular significance to the message it would signify Britain's willingness to work at the relationship. John Graham, Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, wrote to Edward Youde, Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister, to ask whether the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson would, this year, consider sending a message to the Chinese Government as, "there has been a slight improvement in our relations this year due in part to a general return to normal in Hong Kong and efforts by the Chinese to get their conduct of relations with foreign countries back to normal".¹⁴⁵ Sino-British trade relations were again becoming routine and members of the Mission in Beijing were being allowed to travel more freely outside of the city. Thirteen British subjects were still detained in China although it had also been announced that Anthony Grey would be released from captivity on 3 October, the same time as the last of the communist networkers detained in Hong Kong were released. Prime Minister Wilson and

¹⁴³ Ibid., Letter, Brighty to Palliser, 15 October 1968.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Tel. no. 499, Denson to FCO, 2 September 1969.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, PREM 13/2524, Letter, Graham to Youde, 26 September 1969.

Foreign Secretary Stewart agreed that a message should be sent from Wilson to Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Prime Minister.¹⁴⁶

The short message that Wilson sent to Zhou was published in the *People's Daily* newspaper in Beijing. This encouraged the Foreign Office that the Chinese were “gradually reverting to the practices of the pre-Cultural Revolution period and have indicated if only in a protocol sense that they are interested in improving relations”.¹⁴⁷

The transition of China from revolutionary turmoil to pragmatic reconstruction came through a series of decisions made by Mao and his close advisors beginning in late July 1968 and culminated at the First Plenum of the Ninth Party Congress held in April 1969, ushering in a new era in Chinese foreign policy.¹⁴⁸ China began to demonstrate an unprecedented degree of flexibility and moderation by extending the permissible limits of normalisation of relations towards former enemies such as the United States, Japan and Yugoslavia. This transition was clearly pronounced in Beijing's posture towards the United Nations. Under the impetus of this new policy, the People's Republic of China's attitude towards the United Nations assumed a direct, conciliatory and flexible position. The extraneous preconditions for participation disappeared and instead China launched a new campaign to join the family of nations.

Commenting on Chinese affairs in 1969 the Far Eastern Department reported that the Chinese were “aware of their isolation and will probably make more effort to break out and pursue a

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Note, Youde to Graham, 29 September 1969; Ibid., Tel no. 335, Stewart to FCO, 29 September 1969.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Letter, McCluney to Youde, 16 October 1969; Ibid., Tel. no. 1174/69, Zhou to Wilson, 28 October 1969.

¹⁴⁸ S.S. Kim, ‘The People's Republic of China in the United Nations: A preliminary Analysis’, *World Politics*, 26, 3 (April 1974), pp. 299-330.

more pragmatic foreign policy in coming months".¹⁴⁹ The opinion of Michael Wilford, Assistant Under-Secretary for the Far East, was bleak, "I see little hope for real improvement in Sino-British relations in 1970".¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, in the Annual Review of 1969, John Denson concluded that "there has been some further improvement in relations".¹⁵¹ He took a pessimistic view of prospects for detained British subjects, however there had been considerable expansion in trade. The British commercial secretary in the Mission in Beijing re-established contact with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and the year total trade between the two countries was between £80 million and £90 million with exports between £45 million and £50 million.¹⁵²

American attitudes towards China

In the twenty years since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Britain had pursued recognition and then sought to improve bilateral relations. The policy of the United States was very different and there were frequently fierce Sino-American confrontations. Yet when Richard Nixon came to office in January 1969 he re-visited United States policy. He did so in the light of China's increasing technical capabilities. In October 1964 the People's Republic had exploded its first nuclear device, by 1967 had developed a hydrogen bomb and in 1970 orbited its first earth satellite. However Nixon was a politician whose entire pre-Presidential career had been highlighted by relentless opposition to revolutionary movements.¹⁵³ Nixon had always seemed to relate to the Communists as enemies and, until

¹⁴⁹ TNA, FCO 21/643 FEC 1/6, Letter, Wilson to Wilford, 6 February 1970.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., Letter, Wilson to Wilford, 6 February 1970.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., Annual Review, Denson, 1 January 1970.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ S.E. Ambrose, *Nixon vol. 2: The Triumph of a Politician 1962-72* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1989) p. 95; Ambrose quotes the following cases where Nixon urged escalation of military action rather than negotiation, Korea 1950-53, Dien Bien Phu 1954, Hungary and Suez 1956, Cuba 1959, the Bay of Pigs 1961, the Berlin Wall 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis 1962, Vietnam 1964-66.

he assumed the presidency, he gave little indication that his earlier opinions had changed to any great degree. In an article appearing in a 1967 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Nixon urged that the United States give even greater assistance to its Southeast Asian allies to contain China militarily.¹⁵⁴ He reaffirmed his opposition to granting China immediate diplomatic recognition, UN membership or trade privileges, arguing that American policy should be “to persuade China that it must change: that it cannot satisfy its imperialistic ambitions”.¹⁵⁵ In distinguishing between long range and short range policies and goals, Nixon did imply a significant ambiguity, that when and if China did change its behaviour the United States might reassess its own frozen attitudes.

Taking the long-view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors. There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation.¹⁵⁶

On becoming President, Nixon explicitly prioritised the successful pursuit of foreign policy, contemptuously dismissing domestic affairs as “building outhouses in Peoria”.¹⁵⁷ Of particular concern to Nixon was the need to institute an infrastructure that would facilitate foreign policy direction from the White House, while simultaneously enabling him to achieve the ambitious goals he had outlined for his Administration. He soon came to rely heavily both on his high-profile National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, and the National Security Council (NSC) for guidance on foreign policy decisions.¹⁵⁸ Together he and Kissinger

¹⁵⁴ R. Nixon, ‘Asia after Viet Nam’, *Foreign Affairs*, 46, 1(1967), pp. 111-125.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁵⁷ R. Reeves, *President Nixon, Alone in the White House* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2001) p.33.

¹⁵⁸ H. Starr, ‘The Kissinger Years: Studying Individuals and Foreign Policy’, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 24 (December 1980), pp. 465-496.

quickly revitalised the National Security Council, remoulding it into a centralised policy-making structure for the formation and implementation of foreign policy.¹⁵⁹

The Sino-Soviet split altered Washington's fixation on the spectre of 'monolithic communism' and was the force which drove the United States and China towards a new relationship. Nixon's political opportunism coincided perfectly with Henry Kissinger's interest in balance of power politics. Both reasoned that, in the light of the Soviet threat, China might be willing to make concessions to the United States in order to reduce tensions and position its limited strength against the Soviet Union. Indeed in a clear example of triangular diplomacy, declassified sources reveal that Nixon and Kissinger persistently emphasised the Soviet threat to the Chinese in order to secure swift agreement to rapprochement.¹⁶⁰ In a break from the classic bi-polar Cold War, the two American politicians envisioned a multi-polar world in which the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan and Western Europe all enjoyed spheres of interest.

These tentative steps towards rapprochement came at a beneficial time for the Chinese too. Although China had reciprocated America's past hostility, after the 1969 border clashes with the Soviet Union, it was time for Beijing to reassess the country's strategic position. Concluding that the Soviets were a bigger threat than the Americans, whilst recognising the need to pre-empt a potential Soviet-American collusion against the Chinese, the moderate faction's successful selling of their rapprochement policy made a turn towards the Americans

¹⁵⁹ R. Dalek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in power* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009).

¹⁶⁰ W. Burr (ed.), National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No.66 (NSAEBB66), *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip to China, September 1970-July 1971*, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/>.

possible. United States policy seemed, therefore, to be moving closer to the British outlook. Indeed by the early 1970s, the two countries seemed to be pursuing similar goals.

Chapter Two: The Heath Government and China 1970-1972

In June 1970 Britain voted a new government into power. For the remainder of the year the new Prime Minister, Edward Heath and his Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, accepted the essential government position towards China of the previous administration. Due to the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution, between 1968 and 1971 very few official contacts of any kind existed except those of a commercial nature. Cultural and scientific relations had been suspended in 1967. In 1971 however, Douglas-Home developed a fresh approach towards China in order to pave the way for a new phase of Sino-British relations. This chapter will focus on these policy developments and also on the people integral to the formulation of policy, both the Ministers and civil servants, in order to understand the processes by which the China policy was conceived and executed.

The General Election

In June 1970 Edward Heath confounded opinion polls and led the Conservative Party to a solid electoral victory.¹⁶¹ The mandate to lead had been won in a battle based heavily on the personalities of the two main opponents, Harold Wilson and Edward Heath, rather than the Labour versus Conservative political battles of previous elections. Heath's triumph was, therefore, attributed to him personally, with the *Daily Express* proclaiming, "Let there be no mistake, the Tory victory was won by the Prime Minister's own guts and leadership".¹⁶² The

¹⁶¹ The election was held on 18 June 1970, with a 72% turnout. Poll results: Conservative party 330 seats (46.4% vote); Labour party 287 seats (43% vote); Liberal Party 7 seats (7.5% vote). There was a swing of 4.7% from Labour to Conservative votes. For opinion poll results see *The Times*, 17 June 1970; *The Times*, 18 June 1970; M. Abrams, 'The Opinion Polls and the 1970 General Election' in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, Autumn 1970, pp. 317-324.

¹⁶² *The Daily Express*, 19 June 1970; See also *The Times*, 20 June 1970 and J. Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London: Cape, 1993) pp. 285-286; A. Roth, *Heath and the Heathmen* (London: Routledge, 1972) p. 210.

Conservative manifesto had promised a “new style of government” in national affairs with a foreign policy aiming to create “a stronger Britain in the world”.¹⁶³ Heath prioritised management of the new Government, promising a fresh style and structure, setting the tone at the Conservative Party Conference in October, he announced, “We will have to embark on a change so radical, a revolution so quiet and yet so total that it will go far beyond the programme for a Parliament”.¹⁶⁴

As victor in the election, the first task of Heath’s premiership was to appoint his Cabinet. Having conducted the Opposition for five years as preparation for government, it was expected that most Shadow Ministers would get the portfolio they had been covering, indeed most of the principal appointments were made very quickly.¹⁶⁵ The most difficult appointment revolved around two of the most senior figures in the Conservative Party, Reginald Maudling and Alec Douglas-Home. Both men had served as Shadow Foreign Secretary in Opposition and they both had talents and experience indispensable for the three most senior government posts. It was Douglas-Home who Heath finally decided to appoint Foreign Secretary whilst Maudling became Home Secretary. Iain MacLeod was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, however, shortly after the election victory, on 20 July, he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was replaced in the Cabinet by Anthony Barber serving until the fall of the Conservative government in 1974. From 1970 to 1974 Anthony Royle served as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and was heavily involved in Heath’s China policy, visiting China shortly after the exchange of ambassadors in 1972.

¹⁶³ Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, *A Better Tomorrow*, in I. Dale, (ed.), *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997* (London, Routledge, 2000) pp. 177-200.

¹⁶⁴ Blackpool, Conservative Party Conference, October 1970. See also Heath, *The Course of My Life* p.314. In October 1970 a White Paper was produced which incorporated the conclusions of a four month review, CMND 4506: *The Reorganisation of Central Government* (London: HMSO, 1970).

¹⁶⁵ Heath, *The Course of My Life*, pp. 310-311.

Edward Heath

Edward Heath's major achievement in Downing Street was to take Britain into the European Community. When an earlier Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan first applied to join the then European Common Market in the early 1960s, Heath had been in charge of the unsuccessful British negotiating team, though his work had been widely praised. Shortly before Heath became Prime Minister, the third application to join the Common Market had been submitted by Labour's Harold Wilson but Wilson's singleness of purpose was in doubt. Heath's was not. On 28 October 1971, the Commons voted with a 112 majority to go into Europe. Single-minded and determined he was, but this was often mistaken for obstinacy and arrogance.¹⁶⁶ Heath has been described by some contemporaries as "a rigid, humourless Easter-Island-statue of a politician", but others have praised him for his political outlook. David Owen has said, "Ted Heath had some of the best ideas of any post-war Prime Minister. He ... was a rather radical person".¹⁶⁷ One of these good ideas, was perhaps, to take advantage of the improving relations between Britain and China and forge a new, modern bilateral relationship.

Born in 1916, Heath was educated at Chatham House, Ramsgate and studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Balliol College, Oxford. His passions included music and sailing; Heath was an accomplished pianist and conducted the Oxford Orchestra whilst also rising to become president of the Oxford University Conservative Association. Heath served in the Royal Artillery from 1940 until 1946, subsequently becoming a Member of Parliament at the age of thirty-four. Five years after that he was Chief Whip, and ten years on he was leader of

¹⁶⁶ M. Laing, *Edward Heath: Prime Minister* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972) pp. 1-6.

¹⁶⁷ P. Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The office and its holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2001) pp. 331-356.

the Opposition.¹⁶⁸ Heath, then had to wait another five years before his three and three quarter years as Prime Minister. He arrived at Downing Street on 19 June 1970 declaring that “to govern is to serve”.¹⁶⁹

Alec Douglas-Home

In personal terms the relationship between Heath and Home was cordial and effective. Heath had served underneath Douglas-Home during his first tenure as Foreign Secretary and the reversal of seniority which had taken place from the Macmillan years, was potentially awkward. In practice, however, it proved useful for Heath to have an experienced, respected elder statesman, “a middle of the road pragmatist” holding together the traditional strands of British diplomacy while he pushed the initiative for European Membership.¹⁷⁰ Home enjoyed the new leader’s confidence while securing a position of unique affection among the party’s ranks.¹⁷¹ Denis Greenhill described him as “charming ... [having] a friendly and delightful way ... it was quite clear that everyone from foe to friend respected him completely and admired him”.¹⁷²

Home, was born in 1903 into a wealthy landed family, possessed of two great Scottish estates, in Berwickshire and Lanarkshire. He was educated at Eton and later studied Modern History at Christ Church College, Oxford, where he represented the University at cricket.¹⁷³ Home began his parliamentary career in 1931 and in 1935 was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to Neville Chamberlain, accompanying him to Munich to meet Hitler.

¹⁶⁸ Roth, *Heath and the Heathmen*, pp. 167-186.

¹⁶⁹ *The Times*, 19 July 2005; *The Guardian*, 18 July 2005.

¹⁷⁰ G. Walden, *Lucky George* (London: The Penguin Press, 1999) p. 141.

¹⁷¹ D. Dutton, *Douglas-Home* (London: Haus, 2006) pp.94, 104; See also, *The Independent*, 10 October 1995.

¹⁷² BDOHP, Interview with Denis Greenhill.

¹⁷³ Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, pp. 22-43.

Home always maintained that the Munich Agreement was justified, on the grounds that it gave Great Britain time to re-arm.¹⁷⁴ Home served briefly in Winston Churchill's caretaker post-war government, but lost his seat in the subsequent Labour landslide. Douglas-Home became Prime Minister on 19 October 1963, and resigned on 16 October 1964, when the Labour party, led by Harold Wilson, won the general election. He remained leader of the Opposition, and of the Conservative party, from that date until 28 July 1965. Home declined to stand in the contest for Conservative leadership in 1965, and was succeeded by Edward Heath. Thereafter Home loyally and effectively served Heath as Shadow Foreign Secretary and, after the Conservative victory of 1970, served again as Foreign Secretary.

Edward Heath's foreign policy goals

In his first speech to the Conservative Party conference as Prime Minister in October 1970, Edward Heath announced

This Government is now moving into a new era of British diplomacy ... We have so much to contribute from our experience in diplomacy and, above all, in being so fortunate and indeed proud as to have a Foreign Secretary so greatly experienced and widely respected as Sir Alec Douglas-Home. We are leaving behind the years of retreat. We are determined to establish the reputation of Britain once again, a reputation as the firm defender of her own interests and the skilful and persistent partner of all those who are working for a lasting peace.¹⁷⁵

At that time, he seems to have assumed that Britain's diminished position in the world was purely the product of mismanagement by the first Wilson government and that the Conservatives, returning to office after six years, could pick up many of the UK's foreign policy roles where they had been left in 1964.¹⁷⁶ Heath was vociferous in rejecting the notion that Britain was merely a regional power, confined in its roles in its own corner of the world. Rather than the diplomacy of commitment implied by the perspective of the Left, Heath

¹⁷⁴ Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, p. 67.

¹⁷⁵ E. Heath, Leader's Speech, Blackpool, 1970; See also Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 269.

¹⁷⁶ *The Financial Times*, 20 December 1970.

believed that British policy would henceforth be based on the sole criterion of national interest.

The pattern of future British policy is, I believe, based on a realistic assessment of British interests. But it also offers scope for idealism – in building the unity of Europe, in helping forward the prosperity and security of the Commonwealth and in increasing Britain's share in all those international enterprises, small and great, which are edging us toward a better world.¹⁷⁷

Britain's foreign policy plans were laid out for the nation in the Queen's Speech of 1970. The Government planned to build a position of strength in Western Europe, hold on to the North Atlantic Alliance which provided Britain's nuclear umbrella, and retain positions of strength in the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia where Britain had interests that Labour was prepared to abandon.¹⁷⁸ Heath recognised that the early 1970s heralded a change in the general character of international relationships, not just of the particular orientations of the British state. A period of détente between the two great alliance systems of the Soviet Union and the United States, heralded the emergence of a new multi-polar world in which relationships would be loosened, leaving more room for Western Europe, Japan, and China to take their place as regional centres of growing independence of the superpowers.¹⁷⁹

The central foreign policy question for any UK government in the early 1970s was one of how the wider canvass of Britain's external relations would be related to its membership of the European Community (EC) and this was the policy Edward Heath made central to his own and his Government's purposes.¹⁸⁰ Two assumptions about membership emerged at the heart of the Heath government. The first saw entry to the EC being as much about the shoring up of Britain's traditional relations with the Commonwealth and the United States as it was

¹⁷⁷ E. Heath, 'Realism in Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, 1 (1969), pp. 39-51.

¹⁷⁸ *Hansard*, H.L. Deb., vol. 311, cols. 9-11, The Queen's Speech, 2 July 1970.

¹⁷⁹ Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p.468

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.364. See also, E. Heath, 'European Integration over the next ten years: from Community to Union', *International Affairs*, vol. 64, no. 2 (1988).

concerned with Western Europe itself and as likely to produce a much-needed transfusion of economic resources for a flagging national diplomacy; it would make Britain great again. The second view presupposed that Britain would owe its new partners the duty of prior consultation, even if it continued to have important attachments beyond the Community. This inescapable implication of the argument was that Britain should join the Six in a more coordinated approach to foreign policy in order to combat the relative under-representation of Western Europe in the international system. The successful conclusion of Britain's entry to the EC is seen as giving the external policy of the Heath government a clear and enduring importance; indeed, it should be marked out as a turning point in Britain's international position, bringing to an end a period of semi-detachment from West Europe and initiating a process of absorption into the European Community.

In his construction of a common European foreign policy, Heath is often seen as having made a determined effort to direct Britain away from pretensions to a special relationship with the United States.¹⁸¹ As the Minister who had been responsible for the first round of negotiations for Britain's admission to the European Common Market between 1961 and 1963, Heath was well aware of French President De Gaulle's objection that Britain would be a "Trojan Horse" for the United States, providing a surrogate veto for any American Administration over European attempts to develop external policies of their own.¹⁸² Meanwhile, Heath attempted to reduce expectations on both sides of the Atlantic of the maximum possible gains from

¹⁸¹ See J. Dickie, *'Special No More' – Anglo-American relations Since 1945: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1994) pp.133-171; C.J. Bartlett, *'The Special Relationship': A political History of Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (London: Longman, 1992) pp. 107-147; P.L. Hahn, 'Discord or Accomodation? Britain and the United States in World Affairs, 1945-92' in F. Leventhal and R. Quinault, eds, *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (London: Ashgate, 2000) pp. 276-293; D. Reynolds, 'Competitive Co-operation: Anglo-American Relations in World War Two', *Historical Journal*, vol. 23, no.1, March 1980.

¹⁸² S. George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.35.

Anglo-American relations by talking of a “natural” rather than a “special” relationship.¹⁸³ By this he seems to have implied that personal affinities, made possible by common language, should not be confused with political realities by which Britain was physically located in West Europe and intimately entangled in its economic and military subsystems.¹⁸⁴ The argument that the Heath government represented a consistent and well-thought-out effort to wean British foreign policy away from the Special Relationship with the US can, however, be taken too far. Early bilateral contacts reveal a determination to play the classic British foreign policy role of staunch and supportive ally. Heath enjoyed good relations with President Nixon and showed no desire to rock the Anglo-American boat, except on his own priority of the construction of Europe.¹⁸⁵

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office welcomed Nixon’s enthusiasm for the Heath government, noting that he evidently felt that the Conservatives were “more natural allies of a Republican Administration”.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, they were conscious of the possibility that the President’s elation might not outweigh the marked deterioration in the Anglo-American relationship that had occurred over the years. By September 1970, they were recognising that this relationship was “in some respects, no longer central” to the Administration’s policies. This change was attributed to such prosaic events as the relative economic decline of the United Kingdom, the recurrent crises in the British balance of payments, the trauma of Vietnam and the withdrawal from East of Suez.

¹⁸³ R. Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1998) p.132; R.M. Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations Since World War II* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1990) pp.74-117.

¹⁸⁴ *The Financial Times*, 24 January 1972.

¹⁸⁵ Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 308.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, FCO 7/1839, Brief, ‘Anglo-United States relations’, 23 September 1970.

One aspect of Britain's foreign policy that remained underdeveloped during Heath's Government was, however, relations with the Soviet Union. Heath did not attempt to open a dialogue with the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁷ On the contrary, the only major event in Anglo-Soviet relations was the expulsion of 105 Soviet diplomats in 1971, on suspicion of industrial espionage related to Russian interest in Concorde.¹⁸⁸ One possibility is that Heath, involved as he was in the delicacies of British entry to the EC, did not want to repeat Harold Macmillan's mistake of seeming to discuss issues such as Berlin over the head of the West German government; another possibility is that a British role in the thawing of superpower relations was precluded by Heath's attempts to renounce a Special Relationship with the United States and the comparatively healthy state of direct American-Soviet contacts. Certainly, Heath is known to have shared Kissinger's analysis that unless relations with the Soviet Union were handled through multilateral frameworks, there was a risk of a competitive détente with western allies attempting to outbid one another in the concessions they were prepared to make to the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁹ Heath and Douglas-Home thus fully supported the idea that West European Governments should respond to the East-West Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) by developing a common negotiating position in European Political Cooperation and bargaining as a group.¹⁹⁰ If the Heath government lagged behind its partners in European détente, a perhaps unexpected compensation was that this was also a policy which allowed the successful opening to the People's Republic of China, a country which was determined to reward Heath's ambivalence towards the Soviet Union.

¹⁸⁷ A. Deighton, 'Ostpolitik or Westpolitik? British Foreign Policy, 1968-75', *International Affairs* vol. 74, No. 4 (Oct., 1998), pp. 893-901.

¹⁸⁸ Walden, *Lucky George*, pp. 141-149; Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, p. 249.

¹⁸⁹ H. Kissinger, *The White House Years* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979) p.938.

¹⁹⁰ R. Platt, *British relations with the Soviet government in the era of détente, 1964-75*, PhD (University of Liverpool, 2011).

Alec Douglas-Home as Foreign Secretary

Alec Douglas-Home agreed with Heath's general foreign policy aims. His duty as Foreign Secretary was to translate these aims into policies. He achieved Britain's goal of entry into the European Community in 1973. Douglas-Home recognised the decline in Britain's power had the potential to narrow his scope for independent diplomatic initiatives yet remained convinced that Britain could still play a significant role in world affairs. "I think that the evolution we ought to go for is to be a partner in Europe, but with the knowledge from the start that the European community ought to merge later with an Atlantic community."¹⁹¹ Or, as he commented to Lord Cromer, Britain's Ambassador to the United States, Douglas-Home's ambition was to "have our cake in Europe and eat it in America".¹⁹²

The Commonwealth and the Special Relationship were both assets of dwindling importance, though the Foreign Secretary still placed greater weight on keeping in with the United States than did the Prime Minister, not least because of his continuing consciousness of the Soviet threat.¹⁹³ He detested Soviet communism and all it represented and had no doubts as to the moral superiority of the Anglo-American position in the conflict between East and West.¹⁹⁴ Where Heath's world view might be characterised as an attempt to join the EC in order to make Britain great again, Douglas-Home suggested that the future management of external problems should be divided between European and national frameworks and efforts to improve both of these, would be as important as the status of Britain's own national

¹⁹¹ A. Douglas-Home, 'Britain's Changing Role in World Affairs', *Annual Memorial Lecture for the Davies Institute of International Studies* (London: Waterloo Printing, 1974), 11 March 1974.

¹⁹² TNA, FCO 82/176, Cromer to Douglas-Home, 5 January 1972.

¹⁹³ Dutton, *Douglas-Home*, p. 98; Frankel, *British Foreign Policy 1945-1973*, p.202.

¹⁹⁴ C. Hynes, *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration, and the year of Europe* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009) pp. 43-44.

diplomacy.¹⁹⁵ These national frameworks included the improving relationship between Britain and China. In his memoirs, Douglas-Home noted that though he had visited many countries as a politician, “the door into China was firmly locked ... I was anxious therefore to judge for myself the effect of the People’s Revolution on the future role which China would play in the world”.¹⁹⁶ This mirrored public opinion about Britain’s political relations with China. In a Gallup poll conducted in March 1967 when asked the question “Do you think that Britain’s relationship with China is too close, not close enough or about right?” only 9% pronounced the relationship to be “too close”; 34% thought it was “not close enough” while 28% thought it was “about right” (29% answered “don’t know”).¹⁹⁷ The China policy can be viewed as an example of where Douglas-Home’s experience aided Heath in his leadership. For while Heath was indeed Euro-centric in his foreign policy aims at the beginning of his premiership, in his later life he had indeed embraced a more global view, particularly forming a very close relationship with China which lasted well beyond his period as British Prime Minister.

The Foreign Office

By the early 1970s a decisive transition had been implemented in the structure of the Foreign Office as a whole. The rapid reduction of Britain’s international status in the years after 1945, combined with the ever-accelerating trend towards complex bilateral and multinational diplomacy, had motivated Prime Minister Macmillan, in 1962, to action the ‘Committee on Representational Services Overseas’. Chaired by Edwin Plowden, this constituted the first

¹⁹⁵C. Hill and C. Lord, ‘The foreign policy of the Heath government’ in Ball and Seldon (eds.), *The Heath Government 1970-1974* p. 286.

¹⁹⁶ Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, p.263.

¹⁹⁷ C. de Boer, ‘The Polls: Changing Attitudes and Policies Toward China’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer, 1980), p. 269.

investigation into Britain's diplomatic machinery for two decades.¹⁹⁸ Fresh perspectives on diplomacy were needed, as Plowden reported,

What we can no longer ensure by power alone, we must secure by other means. In this, our "diplomatic" Services have an indispensable part to play. The strength and quality of their performance must be fully maintained.¹⁹⁹

As a result of the Plowden Report, in 1968 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was formed from the merger of the short-lived Commonwealth Office and the Foreign Office.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as the headquarters of the Diplomatic Service, was staffed by members of the Service who were required to serve interchangeably at home and abroad.²⁰⁰ The control of foreign relations is one of the most important powers of government. Parliament and the Cabinet played a relatively inactive part in formulating the China policy, the same cannot be said of the civil servants who worked with the Foreign Secretary. In pursuit of foreign policy goals, Alec Douglas-Home benefitted from a highly structured Office of competent officials, who, at all levels, played a regular part in the processes of policy making.²⁰¹

Government departments were the key policy-making institutions in British politics. In addition to being the primary administrative units, departments were the focus for most of the policy process.²⁰² The work of the Foreign Office was divided into geographical and

¹⁹⁸ CMND 2276: *Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas 1962-63* (London: HMSO, 1964); See also, J. Young, *Twentieth Century Diplomacy: A Case Study of British Practice 1963-1976* (London, 2008), pp. 33-40.

¹⁹⁹ CMND 2276: *Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas 1962-63*, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ W. Strang, *The Foreign Office*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957) pp. 17-29.

²⁰¹ R.A.W. Rhodes and P. Dunleavy (eds.), *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive* (London: Macmillan, 1995); J. Barber, *Who makes British Foreign Policy?* (Kent: The Open University, 1976) pp. 7-33.

²⁰² M.J. Smith, *The Core Executive in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999) pp. 106-142.

functional departments, supervised by a Permanent Under-Secretary who was Head of the Diplomatic Service and the manager of all the Foreign Office's resources. It was his responsibility to ensure that the Foreign Secretary remained properly briefed on all matters pertaining to his area. The department which dealt with the China policy was the Far Eastern Department. Departments were not unified organisations with single goals, rather they were separated into divisions responsible for major functions and headed by an Under-Secretary with two or three divisions grouped under a Deputy Secretary. The Head, or Counsellor, organised the work of the department, making final decisions on what information was passed up and which decisions required a high policy verdict; the work of the Head of a department has been described as being the most arduous job the Diplomatic Service has to offer.²⁰³ The China division, or desk, was where research was carried out, where draft submissions and suggestions for action were made and where telegrams and letters were dealt with, with staff deciding on draft papers on subjects of immediate interest for the use of their senior colleagues.

If the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary laid down the basics of policy and the specialised departments drafted more detailed policies, it was diplomats who had to implement it in Missions abroad. The Plowden Report specifically defined the tasks of diplomats: the three main duties being representation, reporting and negotiation, or, as Lord Gore-Booth surmised,

Foreign policy is what you do; diplomacy is how you do it. Of course the two get mixed up especially when a diplomat is advising on policy or a member of the Government normally engaged in policy decision takes over a diplomatic operation which seems to merit top level or summit discussion. But generally speaking the task of a government is to decide and the task of a diplomat at any level is to try to make the decision work.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ R. Boardman and A.J.R. Groom, *The Management of Britain's External Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1973) p.59.

²⁰⁴ P. Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth and Respect* (London: Constable, 1974) p. 15.

The Ambassador is the senior representative of his country in any particular foreign region. The Head of the Chancery supervised the day-to-day organisation of political work at the office. His position was to keep informed about what was passing in the country in which he was serving. He was also responsible for establishing same-level local connections, essential for the efficient conduct of diplomatic business.

Key officials

Two men served as Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs during this period. Sir Denis Greenhill, described as, “the ideal Permanent Under-Secretary”, held the post from 1969 until 1973.²⁰⁵ Liked and respected by his colleagues, Percy Cradock described him as “an extremely good operator, who could sense very quickly what Ministers wanted and what was the best line to take. [He was] extremely alert and sharp on that”.²⁰⁶ Greenhill fought hard to preserve the integrity of the Diplomatic Service in a time of structural and economic upheaval. During the Second World War, Greenhill had served with the Royal Engineers in Egypt, North Africa, Italy, India and Southeast Asia. He entered the Foreign Office in 1946, serving in Sofia, Washington, Paris and Singapore, and then as Minister in Washington. After two years as Assistant Under-Secretary, he was appointed Deputy Under-Secretary in 1966. Greenhill had a good relationship with the incoming Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, recounting in his memoirs that “my role as his Permanent Under-Secretary was to be full of excitement and enjoyment”.²⁰⁷ The man who had what one of his colleagues described as the “impossible task” of succeeding Denis Greenhill was Lord Thomas Brimelow, in November 1973.²⁰⁸ Self-effacing and well-mannered, Brimelow possessed a formidable intellect, an

²⁰⁵ BDOHP, Interview with Donald Maitland.

²⁰⁶ BDOHP, Interview with Percy Cradock.

²⁰⁷ D. Greenhill, *More By Accident* (York, 1992).

²⁰⁸ BDOHP, Interview with Donald Maitland.

outstanding linguist, he had served as Head of the Consular Section in the British Embassy in Moscow, 1942-45, and on more than one occasion had face-to-face meetings with the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin. Brimelow also served as Counsellor in Washington, Ambassador to Poland, and between 1969-1973 returned to London as Deputy Under-Secretary. However, his tenure as Permanent Under-Secretary, lasted barely two years. Brimelow's successor, Sir Michael Palliser, was in the post until 1982, the longest serving Permanent Under-Secretary since the Second World War.

A number of other figures played important roles in London. Sir Michael Wilford served as Assistant Under-Secretary of State 1969-1973. He had been born in Wellington, New Zealand. After studying at Pembroke College, Oxford, he became private secretary to Edward Heath in 1960, to support his work for entry to the European Community. He was then appointed counsellor in Beijing in 1964, enduring the dark onset of the Cultural Revolution. He returned to the Far East in 1967 as acting political adviser to the Governor of Hong Kong before being posted to Washington (1967-69) as Counsellor with special responsibilities for Asian affairs, at a critical time of the Vietnam War. As Assistant (and later Deputy) Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, he was able to use his expertise and experience on Chinese matters to supervise and advise ministers on work in the Far East and South-East Asia. Sir Stanley Tomlinson, was a Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office for the last three years (1969-72) of a distinguished professional career split three ways among the Far East, Europe and the United States. Tomlinson, who bore “a remarkable physical similarity to Clark Gable”, joined the Consular Service in 1935 two years after graduating in economics from Nottingham University.²⁰⁹ He served for six years in Consulates in Tokyo, Kobe and Yokohama, becoming fluent in Japanese. He worked in various posts throughout his career,

²⁰⁹ *The Independent*, 5 October 1994.

mainly in South-East Asia, gaining knowledge which was invaluable to the issues covered while he was Deputy Under-Secretary.

Head of the Far Eastern Department for two years, 1970-1971, Sir John A.L. Morgan joined the army in 1947, before entering the Diplomatic service in 1951 in a career spanning thirty-eight years. He was well experienced having served on the China Desk since 1960. Morgan was succeeded by Sir Richard Evans in 1972. Morgan supervised Hugh Ll. Davies on the China desk in the Far Eastern Department from 1971 to 1974 and also Michael H. Morgan from 1972 until 1975.

The British Head of the Chancery in Beijing from 1971 until 1973 was Richard Samuel who was in daily contact with the Far Eastern department. Samuel served as an advisor to the Ambassador (and until 1972 in the Sino-British case, the Chargé d'Affaires) on political matters.

The role of Parliament and the media in forming Britain's China policy

Though the government runs the country and has responsibility for developing and implementing policy and for drafting laws, Parliament is the highest legislative authority in the Britain. It holds responsibility for checking the work of government and examining, debating and approving new laws. In this system, the Prime Minister's active participation in parliamentary proceedings is a key mechanism for ensuring the accountability of the executive in policy making. However, Parliament itself does not play a central role in foreign policy-making.²¹⁰ It instead plays an indirect role by acting as a restraint on a government's foreign policy, expressing displeasure at some aspect of policy but this would not represent

²¹⁰ Smith, Smith and White (eds.), *British Foreign Policy*, p. 75; See also, Boardman and Groom, *The Management of Britain's External Relations*, p. 247.

anything like detailed scrutiny of policy options. A systematic review of *Hansard* during the period this study covers reveals this to be true of Britain's China policy.

Britain's China policy was debated in the Houses of Parliament during the Chinese civil war with regards to the prospect of Britain recognising Communist China. The main thrust of these deliberations were not confrontational however, both sides of the political floor were agreed that Britain should recognise China, if only to ensure that normal trade could carry on unaffected by the change in regime.²¹¹ China was not a Parliamentary or a Cabinet priority in part because the political parties were not split on the matter.

During the early 1970s, Britain's China policy was not an issue debated on in Parliament. Activity in the House of Westminster was confined to questions, to updates on Britons detained in China, to updates on trade negotiations and to statements on the prospect of diplomatic visits. Information was often accompanied by statements, for example, by the Foreign Secretary on the occasion of the exchange of Ambassadors.²¹² Further political and Parliamentary links were established or strengthened in the early 1970s. A parliamentary delegation travelled to China in the autumn of 1972; another went in November 1973 and during 1971-1973 various members of the Labour Opposition bench met with Chinese officials. Discussions in the House of Commons were not confrontational, rather the impression is formed that all parties recognised the importance of Britain's relationship with China, firstly in terms of trade which remained so important during the domestic difficulties of the 1970s and secondly in terms of Britain's international presence and stature. Indeed

²¹¹ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., 20 October 1949, vol. 468, cc.739-40

²¹² *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., 13 March 1972, vol. 833, cc. 31-5.

these views are reflected both in public opinion polls taken at the time and also newspaper reports.²¹³

The British press has played an important role, varying in circumstances and issues, in the subtle and complex processes by which public and parliamentary attitudes came to be formed. The British press was unanimously in favour of diplomatic recognition in 1950, though with some reservations from the Conservative side. Coherent arguments against aspects of government policy were, in subsequent years, most fully developed by the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*. A steady stream of news and commentary about Chinese developments was maintained, often, despite the challenges encountered in gaining access to information, though particularly after 1950 and the beginning of the Korean War there seems to be a decline in the amount of space devoted to Chinese news, with periodic jumps for crises internal or external to China. The Cultural Revolution brought about a final break of direct contacts maintained by the British press and led to the expulsion of the journalist reporting to *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*. However, the case of Anthony Grey, and his detention in Beijing in 1967-1969, aroused public interest and newspaper and journalists' organisations forged a common front to arouse opinion in Britain, with some success.²¹⁴ In 1969 Grey was released and by August 1970 *The Times* announced that relations were already back to their pre-Cultural Revolution level. The majority of the media were convinced that if Britain wanted diplomatic relations with China she had very little room for manoeuvre or favourable negotiations as there were clearly important reasons for maintaining relations with the most populous nation and one which was becoming a nuclear power. However the *Daily Telegraph* still maintained doubts for the relationship, questioning the

²¹³ de Boer, 'The Polls: Changing Attitudes and Policies Toward China', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*.

²¹⁴ See *Sunday Times*, 16 February 1969; *Daily Express*, 10 May 1969; *Guardian*, 21 March 1970; *Sunday Times*, 29 November 1970.

morality of Sino-British trade, “The current passion for trade with Communist countries smacks of precisely the sort of greed and stupidity which the old Bolsheviks always predicted would lead to the West’s downfall.”²¹⁵

By 1971 the British news media began to enjoy greater access to China which was significant for longer term Sino-British relations. The national dailies sent their own correspondents to cover the visits of Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home and Edward Heath’s later visit. In October 1972 *The Times* established an office in Beijing and its owner, Lord Thomson, visited China in 1972 and was granted an audience with Zhou Enlai. The Far Eastern Department tended to keep a firm grip on the amount of knowledge being made public. A quote printed out of context or a negative story being printed could have jeopardised all the hard work the Foreign Office was putting in to ensure the Sino-British relationship continued to flourish. Thus news and editorial opinion from *The Times* was integral to the forming of public opinion on the Sino-British relationship; while the *Financial Times* maintained a close and well-informed watch over developments with respect to Sino-British trade.

To this extent it is clear that this was not a controversial policy in the 1970s, nor one dictated by public opinion. Neither Parliament, the Cabinet or the media had a driving force in Britain’s China policy, it was a tightly controlled policy led by the Far Eastern Department and its key officials.

Sino-British relations in 1970

Due to the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution, between 1968 and 1971 very few official contacts of any kind existed except those of a commercial nature. When Edward Heath

²¹⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 15 March 1968, writing of the view that trading to China led to the likelihood of potentially strategic items reaching North Vietnam.

assumed the premiership he essentially continued the path of Sino-British relations which the previous Wilson administration had been advocating. In 1970, British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, John Denson, reported that official contacts with the Chinese both in Beijing and in London had gradually become more frequent and more relaxed. Indeed relations were beginning to improve after the lowest point of the Cultural Revolution.²¹⁶ This was illustrated by the visit of the President of the Sino-British Trade Council, Sir John Keswick, to China on 20 October which was his first trip to the country since 1967. During his visit an agreement was reached for the establishment of a direct telephone link between Britain and China. Denson advised the Foreign Office that,

the China market has possibilities but competition will be stiff ... if we are to maintain our present share of the market ... more British businessmen should come here and there should be more Chinese trading Missions [to Britain].²¹⁷

However, there were two main difficulties in the way of further improving Sino-British diplomatic relations, one being the detainees still held in China and Hong Kong of British and Chinese citizens after the troubles of the Cultural Revolution, and the other being the Chinese objection to Britain's voting in the United Nations. While China was becoming more active in foreign affairs, it was important that Britain did not miss the opportunity to form lasting bonds. The implementation of a new, active policy towards China and the maintenance of momentum in this policy would be key to improving bilateral exchanges at all levels.

Representation in Beijing and London

Although China and Britain had opened diplomatic relations in 1950, as Britain retained a Consulate on Taiwan it was not possible to presume to the condition of an embassy and so in 1970, bilateral relations were held at the level of Chargé d'Affaires. The Plowden Report described the main duties of a Consul as

²¹⁶ TNA, FCO 21/802 FEC 1/7, China Annual Review for 1970, 26 January 1971.

²¹⁷ TNA, FCO 21/802 FEC 1/7, China Annual Review for 1970, 26 January 1971.

The Head of a Consular post is responsible for all commercial interests, including export promotion, in his district. He must retain good relations with the local authorities, keep his Ambassador posted about political and economic developments, support information and cultural activities and provide a focus and rallying point for his local community. Thus, within his district a good Consul has the same broad representational responsibilities as an Ambassador or High Commissioner in relation to an overseas country.²¹⁸

John Denson had been appointed Head of the Mission in Beijing in February 1969, serving as Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*.²¹⁹ Although the late 1960s had been a difficult period in Sino-British relations, the desire to improve diplomatic relations was at the forefront of the minds of policy makers in the Far East Department, especially considering, as John Morgan noted, China was "sliding away from the chaos and excesses of the Cultural Revolution phase and adopting a more conciliatory attitude".²²⁰ In 1971, in recognition of the fact that during his time in Beijing there had been a steady improvement in relations between Britain and China, and in an effort to regularise his position in Beijing, the Foreign Office raised John Denson's title to that of Chargé d'Affaires *en titre*, in January 1971.²²¹ It was hoped that Denson's altered designation would improve his protocol position in Beijing, the Foreign Office remained realistic though, it was doubtful that it would affect his level of access to officials within the Chinese Foreign Ministry.²²² When challenged by Julian Amery MP, about why Britain was so eager for full diplomatic relations with China when France had achieved that position in 1964 and did not seem better off than Britain in Sino bilateral relations, Morgan replied that

The importance of our relations with China is greater than any other Western European country because of the existence of Hong Kong. The Prime Minister has agreed that we should develop friendly and workmanlike contacts with the Chinese

²¹⁸ CMND 2276: *Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas 1962-63* p. 281.

²¹⁹ *Ad interim* meaning 'for the time being', as opposed to *en titre* denoting a permanent post.

²²⁰ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Morgan to Amery, 16 April 1971.

²²¹ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3 Tel. no. 3, Douglas-Home to Denson, 5 January 1971; Tel. no. 050900Z, Douglas-Home to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 January 1971.

²²² TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Memorandum, Morgan to Denson, 12 January 1971.

over subjects of interest to Hong Kong and raising the level of our representation could facilitate this.²²³

When he informed the Chinese government of Denson's change in status, Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home made the point clear to the Chinese that the British Government was in favour of an unconditional exchange of ambassadors. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs deferred to their preconditions of the United Nations vote and Britain's stance on the status of Taiwan as reasons for them not reciprocating by appointing a Chargé d'Affaires *en titre* in London.²²⁴ However, Qiao Guanhua, Vice Minister at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirmed to John Denson that his new appointment as British Chargé d'Affaires *en titre* was viewed in Beijing as an effort by the British government to improve bilateral relations. A sentiment that Qiao said his government appreciated.²²⁵ The Vice Minister commented that "while there were a number of outstanding matters between China and Britain these could be regarded as great or small depending on whether efforts were made to get rid of them".²²⁶

The Chinese Chargé d'Affaires *en titre* had not been resident in London since 1967 and a new Chinese Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*, Pei Jianzang, arrived in London in December 1970.²²⁷ Pei confirmed that he had been appointed to his role, *ad interim*, with that status continuing for the foreseeable future.

²²³ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Morgan to Amery, 16 April 1971.

²²⁴ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3 Tel. no. 11, Douglas-Home to Washington, 8 January 1971.

²²⁵ TNA, FCO 21/839 FEC 3/548/6, Tel no. 33, Denson to FCO, 14 January 1971.

²²⁶ Ibid., Tel. no. 33, Denson to FCO, 14 January 1971.

²²⁷ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Tel. no. 153, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 18 March 1971.

British and Chinese detainees

The two preconditions that the Chinese had laid down before negotiations for exchanging ambassadors could begin was Britain's vote in the United Nations on the Important Question Resolution and also its stance on the legal status of Taiwan. However, there were still additional obstacles to fruitful diplomatic relations, the main one being the detention of British subjects in China and Chinese subjects in Hong Kong. This situation was a hangover from the Cultural Revolution where, at the height of the troubles in China and Hong Kong, prisoners had been detained from both sides.

By the end of 1970 seven British subjects were released from detention including Anthony Grey (released in October 1969) and David Johnston the arrest of whom had greatly puzzled the British authorities. He had been the Shanghai Manager of the Chartered Bank when he was arrested in Shanghai in August 1968. The Foreign Office had no knowledge of his alleged crimes until he was finally released into Hong Kong on Christmas Day in 1970. After his release, Johnston informed officials that he had, in fact, been accused of denying his Chinese staff's assertions that the events in Hong Kong in 1967 "constituted a blood bath", and of sending political reports out of the country.

With the release of Johnston, Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home believed that China was sending a clear message that they wished to normalise and improve contacts with Britain.²²⁸

The Chinese, though, then saw Britain as having a moral obligation to respond, and the only response they would consider as acceptable was the release of the remaining 1967 confrontation prisoners in Hong Kong. Douglas-Home thus faced a quandary. He recognised the need to ensure that the release of prisoners did not lead to a reduction in confidence in the

²²⁸ TNA, FCO 21/831 FEC 3/548/1, Tel. no. 24, Douglas-Home to Hong Kong, 8 January 1971; TNA CAB 128/49 CM (71)1, 5 January 1971.

firmness of the government of Hong Kong and its ability to withstand Chinese pressure. On the other hand, the Sino-British situation was calmer than it had been in years. Three years had passed since the tumult and the Communists in Hong Kong had not since clashed with the government of Hong Kong. Although Britain was therefore in a position of comparative strength, if, after the Chinese had played their best card in releasing Johnston and Britain made no response, it was considered that they may resort to more hostile measures.²²⁹

Douglas-Home feared that as the Chinese had linked the continued detention of confrontation prisoners with British subjects detained in China, they might conceivably be eventually tempted to take further hostages. There were many ways in which the Chinese could exert pressure on the British government but the obvious target for pressure was Hong Kong which was much more vulnerable than Britain. Indeed, it was only by maintaining “friendly and practical” contacts with the Chinese that the Colony could maintain its prosperity.²³⁰ Douglas-Home asked that, in the “long term future of the Colony”, the Hong Kong Board of Review consider a reassess of the sentences of the Chinese detainees in Hong Kong, and if it would be possible, to offer remission on their sentences.

In 1971 four British subjects remained detained in China: Mrs Gladys Yang, Mrs Elsie Epstein, Mr Michael Shapiro and Mr David Crook. Each had been resident in China and were either married to Chinese nationals or worked for the Chinese authorities at their time of arrest. Crook, Epstein and Shapiro were all reported as having been arrested by the Chinese towards the end of 1967. Yang was apparently detained in the summer of 1968. It was believed that Shapiro and Epstein had been arrested because of their connections to Wang Li

²²⁹ TNA, FCO 21/831 FEC 3/548/1, Tel. no. 24, Douglas-Home to Hong Kong, 8 January 1971.

²³⁰ TNA, FCO 21/831 FEC 3/548/1, Tel. no. 24, Douglas-Home to Hong Kong, 8 January 1971.

and the left-wing extremists. There was no information on the suspicions against Crook and Yang was thought to have been arrested following the arrest of her husband, Yang Hsien-yi, “for unspecified reasons”.²³¹

Frustratingly, neither the Mission in Beijing nor the Foreign Office in London had any information on their health or well being while they were imprisoned, despite constant approaches to the Chinese authorities. The Chinese authorities had not placed any charges against these detainees; they were all still officially under investigation and as such were not allowed Consular access and could not be visited or receive parcels or letters. However, in April 1971, the Chinese authorities did inform the British Mission that the four British subjects were in good health.²³²

In private, the Mission in Beijing acknowledged that these four detainees fell into a different category from other expatriate British subjects previously detained in China, such as David Johnston and Anthony Grey, and wanted it to be known, in a low key manner, that, from the British side, this matter would no longer impede the future improvement in bilateral relations with China.²³³

Expanding Sino-British relations in 1971

Richard Samuel, Head of the Beijing Chancery, wrote in his annual review that, for China, 1971 had been “one of the most notable years since the founding of the People’s Republic”.²³⁴ There had been an auspicious start to Sino-British relations that year when Chinese Foreign Minister, Zhou Enlai, summoned British Chargé d’Affaires, John Denson, to

²³¹ TNA, FCO 21/850 FEC 14/7, Annexe II to Peking despatch, 9 February 1971.

²³² TNA, FCO 21/850 FEC 14/7, Tel no. 341, Denson to FCO, 8 April 1971.

²³³ *Ibid.*, Letter, Allan to Crowson, 18 January 1971.

²³⁴ TNA, FCO 21/968 FEC 1/5, R. Samuel, Annual Review for China 1971, 11 January 1972.

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2 March. Zhou did not say anything new or unexpected to Denson during the meeting, the main significance being that the meeting took place at all. This was the first time that a British Chargé had been summoned by Zhou since 1959.²³⁵ The meeting began with Zhou apologising for the burning down of the British Mission in 1967. He went on to say that the Chinese would pay for its reconstruction which was the first time that the Chinese government had agreed to take the full financial responsibility. The full cost of the rebuilding in Beijing was £22,000.²³⁶ Also for the first time, Zhou gave Denson information about the four British subjects still detained in China. These two points indicated to the Foreign Office that the Chinese wished to, “forget the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and would like to put our relations on a firmer footing”.²³⁷ Zhou made it clear to Denson that the main impediment to better relations remained the continued detention in Hong Kong of the forty-nine prisoners committed for offences in 1967. In commenting on this point, the Foreign Office agreed that it would be “clearly advantageous to Sino-British relations, and it remains our aim, that this legacy of the Cultural Revolution be disposed of by this autumn”.²³⁸ The conversation turned to the United Nations and Taiwan with Zhou telling Denson that if China and Britain were to proceed on an exchange of ambassadors then Britain must change her vote on the “Important Question Resolution” in the United Nations. With regards to the continued presence of the British Consulate in Taiwan, Zhou said this was the equivalent of having “two feet in two boats”. The main conclusion Denson drew from the meeting was that “the Chinese have now said specifically that the removal of the Consulate in Taiwan is a condition ... to the exchange of ambassadors”.²³⁹

²³⁵ TNA, FCO 21/839 FEC 3/548/6, Letter, Gordon to Wilford, 8 March 1971.

²³⁶ TNA, FCO 21/839 FEC 3/548/6, Supplementary note, undated.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, Brief, Moon, 12 March 1971.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, Record of meeting, 2 March 1971.

In April 1971, the foundation was set for an active foreign policy for improved relations with China. The Prime Minister approved the objectives of Britain's China policy which were:

- (1) To normalise and improve our bilateral contacts;
- (2) To increase Britain's share of the Chinese market, in particular capital goods;
- (3) To help bring China into a healthier relationship with the rest of the world (in particular the United Nations and in such international agreements as the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty);
- (4) To maintain the peace and prosperity of Hong Kong;
- (5) To maintain and improve Britain's presence in Beijing which was of particular value in the context of intelligence.

It was suggested that the next step in this policy should be to raise representation in Beijing to Ambassadorial level. The Chinese conditions to this were twofold: that Britain no longer support the Important Question Resolution and that Britain withdraw the Consulate from Taiwan. In order to achieve this goal, John Graham recommended that: the Foreign Office should propose to China the appointment of John Addis as Britain's Ambassador to China and in doing so, inform the Chinese that Britain would no longer support the Important Question Resolution if tabled and that she was taking steps to withdraw her Consulate from Taiwan. Action on the latter would not be initiated until agreement for Addis to be Ambassador had been received.²⁴⁰ Heath was especially keen that Britain should not change her position on the sovereignty of Taiwan. His view was that the Foreign Office should press ahead with normalising relations with Beijing while trying to avoid sacrificing British trade interests in Taiwan.²⁴¹

Sino-British relations "took a further turn for the better" during the year. There were increased contacts in various fields and more interestingly, Zhou Enlai assured Malcolm MacDonald, the former Commissioner-General for South-east Asia, who was warmly received during a visit in October that China had no desire to "take back" Hong Kong before

²⁴⁰ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3 Memorandum, Graham to Douglas-Home, 28 April 1971.

²⁴¹ TNA, FCO 21/839 FEC 3/548/6, Letter, Moon to Graham, 22 March 1971.

the New Territories lease ran out. Chinese officials even attended the party given in February by the Chargé d'Affaires, John Denson, to mark the reopening of the British Mission.²⁴² The Chinese Government also acknowledged the general improvement in relations by having the (Acting) Foreign Minister at the Queen's Birthday for the first time since the Cultural Revolution. Zhou Enlai, for his part, went out of his way on a number of occasions to express his admiration for the present British Government's part in building up a more independent Europe capable of dealing with the other major powers on equal terms.²⁴³ More significant still, was the opening, though unfortunately not, so far, successful conclusion of talks on an exchange of ambassadors between Britain and China.

In spite of warnings that further Sino-British co-operation in modern technology was dependent on further progress in the negotiations for an exchange of ambassadors, there was a welcome increase in the number of British business visitors invited to Beijing for trade discussions. Although Britain's exports dropped from £44 million in 1970 to around £30 million, she retained her position as fifth largest supplier to China: behind Japan, West Germany, Canada and France.²⁴⁴

New developments in policy to China: The United Nations

The issue of Chinese representation at the United Nations loomed large in Sino-British relations. By 1970, the Chinese leadership had incorporated the objective of winning the UN seat into the grand strategy of its new foreign policy and as the domestic turmoil of the Cultural Revolution lessened, the prospects for its representation improved.²⁴⁵ Britain had

²⁴² TNA, FC0 21/968 FEC 1/5, R. Samuel, Annual Review for China 1971, 11 January 1972.

²⁴³ TNA, FC0 21/968 FEC 1/5, Annual Review for China 1971, R. Samuel, 11 January 1972.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., R. Samuel, Annual Review for China 1971, 11 January 1972.

²⁴⁵ Kim, 'The People's Republic of China in the United Nations: A preliminary Analysis', *World Politics*, pp. 299-330.

followed a consistent policy throughout the period 1961 until 1970 which was to support the representation of Beijing at the United Nations. Even in the year that the British Mission in Beijing was burned down, the vote was still cast to support China's participation in the United Nations. The sticking point with China came as London continued to vote for the Albanian and Important Question Resolutions.²⁴⁶

When, in 1961, it had become impossible to maintain the moratorium on discussion of the seating of China at the United Nations, the United States Government agreed to abandon their usual motion and instead arranged for the Australian Government to introduce a motion proposing that the seating of China was an "Important Question".²⁴⁷ The effect of this was to ensure that any motion to seat the Chinese would require a two-thirds majority (instead of the usual 50 percent majority for procedural matters) in order to succeed. At the same time, nations sympathetic to the People's Republic, led by the People's Republic of Albania moved an annual resolution in the General Assembly to "expel the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek" (an implicit reference to the Republic of China) and permit the People's Republic to occupy the China seat at the United Nations. Each year, the United States was able to assemble a majority of votes to block this resolution. Britain considered that, whilst they worked for a more realistic approach to the question of Chinese representation, they would not, in doing so, wish to bring about a major diplomatic defeat for the United States. Therefore, whilst supporting a motion to seat Communist China, London would at the same time, support the Albanian Resolution and the motion that this was an Important Question.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ TNA, FCO 21/971 FEC 2/2, Summary, Crowe to Douglas-Home, 3 February 1972.

²⁴⁷ TNA, PREM 13/3533, Letter, Gordon Walker to Rusk, 12 November 1964.

²⁴⁸ For more on the diplomacy of the UN, see P.G. Lauren 'The Diplomats and Diplomacy of the United Nations' in G.A. Craig and F.L. Loewenheim, (eds.) *The Diplomats 1939-1979* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) pp. 459-495.

Early in 1971 both the British and Italian Governments informed the Americans in confidence that they were not prepared to vote for the Important Question Resolution at the next General Assembly and it seemed evident that the Canadians would do likewise. By May 1971, there were ten countries in various stages of movement towards recognising the People's Republic of China (Austria, Belgium, Ghana, Iran, Lebanon, Mexico, Peru, Senegal, Thailand and Turkey). The Prime Minister reported in January 1971 that the longer Beijing remained outside the United Nations the more difficult it would be to solve the problems present in the world at that time, such as the Vietnam War.²⁴⁹ Heath also feared that the Chinese would soon see themselves less in need of Britain's support and if she were to again vote for the Important Question Resolution, she may be left amongst the small band of countries against whom the Chinese could bear a lasting grudge which would greatly impair the diplomatic work of the British Mission in Beijing.²⁵⁰

The Americans also began contemplating a change in their China policy at the United Nations. In the 1970 debate on Chinese representation their Deputy Permanent Representative had described his Administration as actively seeking "to move from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation with Peking". Furthermore, they claimed to be as interested as anyone in seeing the People's Republic "play a constructive role in the family of nations", provided, of course, that this was not achieved at the expense of Nationalist China.²⁵¹ On 21 March, Ambassador George H.W. Bush admitted that the question of Chinese Representation was under review at a high level and that President Nixon had "expressed a certain flexibility". On 2 August, two weeks after news of Henry Kissinger's successful secret visit to Beijing had been announced, William Rogers, American Secretary

²⁴⁹ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Brief, Far Eastern Department, 24 May 1971; TNA, FCO 21/971 FEC 2/2, Summary, Crowe to Douglas-Home, 3 February 1972.

²⁵⁰ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Background Note, Morgan, 23 April 1971.

²⁵¹ TNA, FCO 21/971 FEC 2/2, Summary, Crowe to Douglas-Home, 3 February 1972.

of State, proclaimed that the United States would support action at the General Assembly for seating the People's Republic of China but would continue to oppose any action to "expel" the Republic of China or "otherwise deprive" it of representation in the United Nations.

In the 1970 General Assembly, the substantive resolution to seat Beijing and expel the Nationalists was passed by a simple majority for the first time. Now, only the procedural resolution requiring that the question needed a two-thirds majority effectively barred Beijing's entry to the United Nations. There were suggestions of a "Two Chinas" option. It was clear that some members of the United Nations would welcome a formula that would enable them to vote for the proposition of the Albanian Resolution that

The representatives of the Government of the People's Republic are the only lawful representatives of China to the United Nations

But which did not require them to vote at the same time in favour of

Expelling forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organisations related to it.²⁵²

This would apply to a number of European countries who were known to favour this kind of "Two Chinas" solution, such as Belgium and Austria, and some African countries which voted in a more or less orthodox pro-Beijing way but nevertheless thought that the United Nations should display a more "reasoned attitude" (such as Ghana and Tunisia). Although superficially attractive, this was not a practical solution in the eyes of the British Foreign Office. If Beijing was admitted as representative of China there would be no seat for Taiwan to occupy. There would, moreover, be no possibility of Taiwan becoming a new Member State; this would be vetoed in the Security Council either by China, if already present, or the Soviet Union. More important, both Beijing and Taiwan insisted on recognition as the representative of the whole of China.

²⁵² Kissinger, *The White House Years*, pp. 773-774.

In 1971 the Far Eastern Department confirmed their new position. Ideally the population of 14 million of Taiwan would be represented in the United Nations but while the Nationalists continued to describe themselves as “China” and in the absence of an agreement between Beijing and Taipei there could be no possibility of their continued representation. In Britain’s view, it was more important for the 800 million people on the Chinese mainland to be represented.²⁵³ Britain’s assessment of the situation was that although Beijing had adopted a less polemical attitude to the United Nations and withdrawn its earlier preconditions for entry, their attitude to the expulsion of Taiwan had hardened. There seemed to be no chance of this changing before the General Assembly in 1971 and, as they could see victory in sight, there was no incentive for the Chinese to do so.²⁵⁴ On 25 October 1971, the United Nations General Assembly voted to admit the People’s Republic of China and to expel the Republic of China. The Communist PRC therefore assumed the ROC’s place in the General Assembly as well as its place as one of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758, specified that it was a “restoration of the lawful rights” to the PRC, indicating that Mao’s China had been denied its rightful seat since 1949. In taking her seat at the United Nations in 1971, China marked the end of her twilight years on the fringes of the international community, she was now an integral force in global affairs.

²⁵³ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Brief, Far Eastern Department, 24 May 1971.

²⁵⁴ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Morgan to Parsons, 26 April 1971.

Chapter Three: The Exchange of Ambassadors

Britain had recognised the People's Republic of China as the *de jure* government in 1950. In 1954, after the Geneva Conference, the two countries exchanged Chargé d'Affaires. Following China's internal strife of the 1960s and the Sino-Soviet split, the People's Republic began to emerge from its global isolation with a new foreign policy. In 1971 moves were underway in the Foreign Office to upgrade diplomatic relations to Ambassadorial level which would not only lead to increased commercial, political and cultural exchanges but also give Britain greater access to the top level of leadership of the Chinese Government. The establishment of embassies was designed to symbolise the normalisation of relations between countries. The British Government had been in favour of an unconditional exchange of ambassadors with China since 1950. The Chinese themselves raised various conditions before such an exchange could take place. Consistent features were Chinese objection to the maintenance of a Consulate on Taiwan and to Britain's vote on the Important Question Resolution on Chinese representation in the United Nations.

Opening negotiations for the exchange of Ambassadors

The first time the question of exchanging ambassadors was raised officially after the Cultural Revolution was at a party held in Beijing in honour of Queen Elizabeth II's birthday, on 13 June 1970. Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luo Guibo, remarked to British Chargé d'Affaires John Denson that the two countries had been in "semi-relations" for years and that it was "unfortunate" it had yet not been possible to exchange Ambassadors.²⁵⁵ On 15 January 1971 Anthony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, informed Pei Jianzhang, newly appointed Chinese Chargé d'Affaires

²⁵⁵ TNA, FO 676/566 FEC 3/5, Memorandum, Chronology of Negotiations, undated.

in London that Britain would like to negotiate a joint agreement.²⁵⁶ Political change in Communist China and the prospect of increased trade, particularly in capital goods, had made the elevation of the British Mission in Beijing an attractive proposition. Both sides would gain from this joint communiqué. The Foreign Office believed that the presence of an Ambassador in Beijing would give Britain greater access to the top level leadership of the Chinese Government, and was seen as a further step in the continued improvement of Britain's relations with China, hoping it would lead to increased commercial, political and cultural exchanges.²⁵⁷ The Chinese attached an ever greater importance to her relationship with Britain following ratification of her entry into the EEC. China saw this as a momentum of energy towards the creation of a "European bloc" which would constitute a welcome counterbalance to "the unscrupulous arms expansion" by the Soviet Union.²⁵⁸ The most striking feature of this "new" relationship, however, must be the "easier, franker and more cordial" exchanges between officials at all levels.²⁵⁹ This was to enable British policy makers to understand further China's attitudes, especially with regard to foreign policy strategies, proving to be of great importance in the evolution of Asian affairs.

The presence of British diplomats there had for some time supplied what John Morgan, the head of the Far East Department, termed a "high level of specialist Chinese expertise" which was of "outstanding use in the context of intelligence exchanges with ... Allies" and this, in his opinion, would be improved by raising the office of the Chargé d'Affaires to the level of an embassy. The Chinese response from Premier Zhou Enlai, given to John Denson on 3 March, and repeated by Pei Jianzhang in London on 26 March, was that the Chinese would

²⁵⁶ TNA, FCO 21/833, FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Morgan to Wilford, 6 April 1971.

²⁵⁷ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Guidance note 69, 9 March 1972.

²⁵⁸ TNA, FO 676/567, 3/16, Letter, Richardson to Davies, "British Defence White Paper: Chinese Press Comment", 22 February 1972.

²⁵⁹ TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, J.M. Addis, "China: Annual Review for 1972", 8 January 1973.

like to open negotiations but set two preconditions: that Britain should no longer support the Important Question Resolution at the United Nations and that the British Consulate in Taiwan should be withdrawn. These conditions were more precise than anything that the Chinese had previously suggested to Britain but it should be noted that neither Zhou nor Pei made any reference to Taiwan's legal status.²⁶⁰ As John Denson had advised John Morgan, Head of the Far East Department,

Now is probably as good or indeed a better moment than any other to decide to go for an exchange of ambassadors. If we do not do so, I do not think that the problem will get any easier in the future. Indeed our general relations with China might slip back for one reason or another. Furthermore, we shall remain at the disadvantage of having a lower-level representative at a time when China is expanding her diplomatic contacts and showing some disposition to find out the views of others.²⁶¹

The Foreign Office was reluctant to proceed without first consulting Washington. Six months earlier, on 22 October 1970, the British had sought the State Department's views on a possible change in Britain's stance on the Important Question Resolution. In the absence of any answer they repeated the question on 20 January 1971 and again on 17 and 23 February when they stressed that this was now a matter of some urgency. As there was still no American response, on 27 April Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home took advantage of the presence in London of William Rogers, the American Secretary of State, to tell him that the British government had decided to put to the Chinese authorities the name of its ambassador designate and to inform them that they would be meeting the conditions set by Beijing.²⁶²

There had always been differences between the approach of Britain and the United States towards recognition. Britain regarded recognition not as a political card but as something that

²⁶⁰ TNA, FO 676/566, Memorandum; see also R. MacFarquhar, 'The China Problem in Anglo-American Relations', in W. Louis and H. Bull (eds.), *The 'Special Relationship': Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p. 318.

²⁶¹ TNA, FCO 21/833 FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Denson to Morgan, 6 April 1971.

²⁶² TNA, CAB 148/116, DOP(71)27, Memorandum by Douglas-Home, 14 June 1971.

must be accorded after an appraisal of the factual and legal situation. The United States regarded recognition essentially as a political act and more often than not based on considerations of morals.²⁶³ When the Foreign Office was considering the relationship between the American and British initiatives it was important to bear this in mind. President Nixon had declared to *Time Magazine* in 1970, "If there is anything I want to do before I die, it is to go to China", and the United States policy towards recognising China was in flux.²⁶⁴ On 1 June, President Nixon announced that "a significant change has taken place among the members of the U.N. on the admission of mainland China," adding that the administration was "analysing the situation" and would announce its position at the October session of the United Nations. While debate continued in America, Rogers requested that the British Government delay their action by one month to allow Nixon time in which to decide on Chinese representation.²⁶⁵

Michael Wilford, Assistant Under-Secretary in the Far East Department, worried that Whitehall's own negotiating position may be undermined by an American initiative of which they might receive little or no forewarning. "It would be deplorable if, after we have gone out of our way to assist the Americans, we should find the ground cut from under our feet by a Presidential announcement of this kind".²⁶⁶ Thus, while London applauded the new nature of the Sino-American relationship the circumstances of its inception exacerbated frictions between Washington and London.²⁶⁷ Britain would gain no credit from Beijing if the Americans unilaterally abandoned the Important Question Resolution and there was a danger that, in that case, Beijing might then raise its conditions for an exchange of ambassadors.

²⁶³ TNA, FCO 21/835 FEC 3/548/3, Briefing paper, 9 August 1971.

²⁶⁴ *Time*, October 1970. See also, H. Thomas (ed.), *The Nixon Presidential Press Conferences* (London: Heyden, 1978), pp. 162-163 and pp. 186-187.

²⁶⁵ TNA, CAB 148/116, DOP (71) 27, memorandum by Douglas-Home, 14 June 1971.

²⁶⁶ TNA, FCO 21/823, Letter, Wilford to Millard, 4 May 1971.

²⁶⁷ TNA, FCO 21/826, Letter, Graham to Moon, 16 July 1971.

However, again, on 4 June at a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) Ministerial meeting in Lisbon, Rogers asked Douglas-Home to delay any action.²⁶⁸

On 16 June, Douglas-Home sent a telegram to Washington informing them that, having again considered Britain's proposals for the improvement in relations with Beijing, Whitehall's strategy henceforth would be to propose a named ambassador for agreement by the Chinese. They would also inform Beijing that Britain would no longer support the Important Question Resolution on Chinese representation at the United Nations nor any procedural initiative which might have the effect of delaying the seating of the People's Republic. In receipt of a favourable response to these steps from Beijing, London would take steps to remove British official representation on Taiwan.²⁶⁹ Finally, on 17 June, Rogers sent a personal message to Douglas-Home informing him that he had no objection to Britain's proceeding with its China initiative.²⁷⁰

Mr Royle opened the negotiations in London on 22 June by telling Pei formally that, following his statement on 26 March, Britain wished to proceed to an exchange of Ambassadors.²⁷¹ However, the three months that had elapsed since March had witnessed a steady improvement in China's diplomatic position. Other Western countries had indicated their support for its membership of the United Nations and American moves had increased the confidence of the leadership in Beijing. It came as no great surprise later to learn then, that on 10 July, when John Denson was informed by Vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua that the appointment of an ambassador should be accompanied by a joint statement including

²⁶⁸ TNA, CAB 148/116 DOP (71) 32, Memorandum by Douglas-Home, 14 June 1971.

²⁶⁹ TNA, FCO 21/834 FEC 3/548/3, Tel. no. 1671, Douglas-Home to Washington, 16 June 1971.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Tel. no. 1680, Washington to FCO, 17 June 1971.

²⁷¹ TNA, FO 676/566, FCO Memorandum, 1972.

the phrase “China’s province in Taiwan”, Henry Kissinger was in Beijing and it was just five days before the announcement of Nixon’s forthcoming visit to China.²⁷² Denson wrote to Michael Wilford, Assistant Under-Secretary for the Far Eastern Department,

Now that they [China] have got what they want over the United Nations, they could take a very hard line and try to squeeze another concession out of us. If so, I think tactically we should be prepared to play it cool and long. The more eagerness we show to get an Ambassador here, the more likely the Chinese are to turn the screw.²⁷³

The American China policy

The developing British policy towards China at this stage was, of course, conditioned by changes in the wider international environment. The British government’s freedom of action was most notably constrained in part by its assessment of what the Americans were doing. Whitehall had kept in close contact with Washington regarding its plans for developing Chinese bilateral relations. Therefore, when President Nixon, in a nationwide broadcast, announced that Henry Kissinger had visited Beijing for three days, 9-11 July 1971, that this was a trip which had formed the basis of ongoing attempts to forge Sino-American relations, and that the President himself would visit the People’s Republic of China at an appropriate time before May 1972, the Foreign Office was astonished.²⁷⁴

As the Sino-Soviet split deepened and widened, each side found itself impelled towards détente with the United States. Unknown to Whitehall, the Nixon Administration had finally breached the barrier by accepting Zhou Enlai’s April 1971 invitation to send Henry Kissinger

²⁷² TNA, FCO 21/834, Tel. nos. 628 and 629, Beijing to FCO, 10 July 1971; Kissinger, *The White House Years*, pp. 732-760.

²⁷³ TNA, FCO 21/835 FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Denson to Wilford, 27 July 1971.

²⁷⁴ *The Times*, 16 July 1971; TNA, FCO 21/826, Letter, Samuel to Hervey, 27 July 1971; TNA, FCO 21/826, Letter, Graham to Moon, 16 July 1971; *FRUS* 1969-1976, vol. E-13, Documents on China, Document 9, Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, 14 July 1971.

on a secret mission to China.²⁷⁵ An American meeting in October 1970 with Pakistan's leader Yahya Khan had some potential for contacts as Pakistan had provided a channel for earlier Sino-American communication in 1969.²⁷⁶ Nevertheless, documents reveal that Kissinger was also trying other channels, such as the Romanian government and an old associate, Jean Sainteny who had connections at the Chinese embassy in Paris.²⁷⁷ Kissinger called the seventeen hours of discussions with Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, "the most intense, important and far reaching of my White House experience".²⁷⁸

British diplomats were generally united in their criticism of the behaviour of Henry Kissinger in regard to this issue. Deputy Under-Secretary, Stanley Tomlinson, implied the Foreign Office were well aware that their opposite numbers in the State Department were also no better informed than they were about Kissinger's actions. When, on 3 December, Donald Tebbit, British Minister in Washington, sought information about what Nixon hoped to secure in China, he was told by Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific, that he "did not know how far "Henry" had got when he was in Peking, but he doubted if he had got very far," and that "he frankly did not know what could be achieved [by the Nixon visit] beyond the opportunity to talk freely".²⁷⁹

Joseph Godber, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, complained,

²⁷⁵ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, vol. XVII, China 1969-1972, Document 118, Zhou to Nixon, 21 April 1971; *FRUS* 1969-1976, vol. XVII, China 1969-1972, Document 125, United States to People's Republic of China, 10 May 1971; TNA, CAB 128/50 CM(72)10, 24 February 1972.

²⁷⁶ *FRUS* 1969-1976, vol. E-13, Documents on China, 1969-1972, Document 1, Memorandum, 19 December 1969; *Ibid.*, Document 2, Memorandum, 23 December 1969.

²⁷⁷ Burr, NSAEBB66, *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip to China, September 1970-July 1971* at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66>.

²⁷⁸ *FRUS* 1969-1976, vol. E-13, Documents on China, 1969-1972, Document 7, Kissinger to Haig, 11 July 1971.

²⁷⁹ TNA, FCO 21/981 FEC 3/304/1, Letter, Tebbit to Wilford, 10 January 1972.

My feeling quite simply is that we have been out-smarted by the Americans on the question of China. If the Chinese insist on the insertion of “China’s province of Taiwan”, we shall have to accept this in due course because of public pressure in this country when the Americans do a deal with the Chinese, as I feel sure they will. I am not desperately anxious to exchange Ambassadors with the Chinese but, if we are to do it, I would rather do it now than to come in with the flotsam and jetsam that will follow American recognition of Peking.²⁸⁰

A month later, Nixon wrote to Heath “to share with you [Heath] some of the considerations involved in my decision to accept the Chinese invitation to visit Peking and our recent statement on United Nations policy”.²⁸¹ Patrick Grattan surmised that the letter was merely “a rather belated attempt to make up for the shortness of the notice we received [of the announcement]”.²⁸² The letter added virtually nothing to Nixon’s published statement and it was supposed that letters along the same lines were also being sent to other governments around the world.

Later in the year, Heath and Nixon met in Bermuda, 20-21 December, for bilateral talks. The principal objective was to put an end to the pattern of poor consultation that had been a hallmark of the relationship for the past few months.²⁸³ The “complexity of the period” that lay ahead demanded “urgent action” to ensure that transatlantic relations were restored to the “closeness which we regard as essential”.²⁸⁴ Hugh Overton, Head of the North America Department in the Foreign Office, agreed that Bermuda represented “a critical moment” in Anglo-American relations as Britain’s relations with the United States “touch our whole foreign policy at every point”.²⁸⁵ Although talks centred around Europe, it was also hoped that the meeting in Bermuda, would enable the Prime Minister to secure a clearer picture of

²⁸⁰ TNA, FCO 21/835 FEC 3/548/3, Letter, Godber to Douglas-Home, 29 July 1971.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Letter, Nixon to Heath, 11 August 1971.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, Letter, Grattan to Moon, 19 August 1971.

²⁸³ *The Times*, 2 November 1971; *The Times*, 15 November 1971 See also Hynes, *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration, and the year of Europe*, pp. 51-55.

²⁸⁴ TNA, PREM 15/712, Draft, Bermuda meeting between Heath and Nixon, undated.

²⁸⁵ TNA, FCO 82/63, Overton to Brimelow, 24 November 1971.

the results of Kissinger's excursions to China and the objects of the President's forthcoming visit which had been announced would take place on 21 February 1972. Officials hoped to clarify United States policy towards China and to make sure that Nixon understood British intentions, "in order to minimise the possibility of friction between US and British policies in this area".²⁸⁶ Talks ensued on many issues although the Nixon Administration held their cards close to their chest; it was clear to the Foreign Office that "the old ease and closeness of the Anglo-American inter-communication [had] been lost".²⁸⁷ Subsequent acknowledgement of the "natural relationship" between Britain and the United States indicated that the two countries had entered a new phase in bilateral policy making but the summit in Bermuda had undoubtedly "cleared away some difficulties and irritations" in the Anglo-American relationship.²⁸⁸

Continuing negotiations for the exchange of Ambassadors

British diplomats found themselves progressively drawn into detailed and protracted negotiations over the terms of a joint Sino-British statement. On 20 July, Anthony Royle met Chinese Chargé d'affaires, Pei Jianzhang, in London to tell him that Whitehall regretted the introduction of "the new element". Pei replied that "the essence of the two questions of principle already raised was the issue of the status of Taiwan".²⁸⁹ Douglas-Home pressed Denson to ascertain in the next round of talks whether there was likely to be any readiness on the Chinese side to accept anything less than "China's province Taiwan".²⁹⁰ Indeed when the Chargé d'Affaires met Qiao on 27 August in Beijing, the Vice Foreign Minister did indicate a willingness to accept a compromise on the wording of the formula for Taiwan. By 6 October,

²⁸⁶ TNA, FCO 82/66, Draft, Bermuda meeting between Heath and Nixon, undated.

²⁸⁷ TNA, PREM 15/712, Draft, Bermuda meeting between Heath and Nixon, undated.

²⁸⁸ TNA, FCO 82/176, Letter, Cromer to Douglas-Home, 5 January 1972.

²⁸⁹ TNA, FO 676/566, FCO memorandum, 1972.

²⁹⁰ TNA, FCO 21/835 FEC 3/548/3, Tel. no. 532, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 19 August 1971.

Denson confirmed to Qiao that Britain would be prepared to make an “oral assurance” that she would “no longer promote or support the fallacy that the status of Taiwan is undetermined”. Qiao noted that there was, “now no difference between us” on the exchange of notes for the agreement and that there should be “no major difficulty” on the oral assurance.

There were no more meetings held between the two countries before 26 October when the General Assembly voted to seat the representatives of the People’s Republic and to expel those of the Nationalist China. Although the British voted with the majority, the move left them with even fewer bargaining counters than before in the bilateral negotiations on an exchange of ambassadors.²⁹¹ Pei personally thanked Richard Evans, Head of the Far East Department, on 28 October for Britain’s vote but observed that her stand on Taiwan still remained “contradictory”. A stalemate developed whereby Britain sought to find a formula that would be acceptable to their legal standpoint on the status of Taiwan and Beijing applying pressure to commit to their statement or there could not be agreement of terms.²⁹²

Officials at the Far Eastern Department still felt there were good reasons for Britain continuing to press for the early resolution of this issue. In a memorandum dated 31 December, Douglas-Home set out four political arguments in favour of achieving an agreement: (1) the Chinese were beginning to use “commercial relations” as a lever with which to exercise pressure on the British, and with unemployment rising the government felt it would be exposed to strong criticism from firms hoping to win contracts in China; (2) good relations with China in the context of Hong Kong were of paramount importance to Britain and justified it going beyond the position of other friendly countries; (3) China’s entry into

²⁹¹ TNA, FCO 21/835 FEC 3/548/3, Tel. no. 532, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 19 August 1971.

²⁹² *The Sunday Times*, Interview with Zhou Enlai, 5 December 1971.

the UN necessitated access to its rulers at the highest level and that only ambassadors could command; and (4) a number of current issues, including air traffic rights and Hong Kong/Guangzhou telex links were being held up pending agreement.²⁹³

The Foreign Secretary evaluated these issues and Britain's China policy at the beginning of 1972 by, "considering ... how we should play the next round in our negotiations for the exchange of Ambassadors".²⁹⁴ China had cooled in her communications before the end of 1971, the sticking point being the language used when referring to the status of Taiwan. The text of a joint communiqué had been agreed in principle but the Chinese had asked for a confidential assurance that British politicians would no longer use the phrase "the status of Taiwan is undetermined" when answering questions on Britain's view of the Taiwan Question.²⁹⁵ Whitehall was prepared to do this but were still negotiating on what spokesmen would say instead. It would have to take into account the diverging attitudes between the two countries on Taiwan's actual status, political on China's side and juridical on Britain's. Douglas-Home was resolved that Britain should make "a further effort" to reach agreement with the Chinese on the basis of a "compromise formula".²⁹⁶ While the British Government had previously described Taiwan as a State where "sovereignty ... is undetermined", the Foreign Secretary now suggested a joint announcement declaring,

The Government of the United Kingdom, acknowledging the position of the Chinese Government that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China, have decided to remove their official representation from Taiwan.

Douglas-Home believed that this formula would be legally acceptable, as it did not commit Whitehall to the present status of Taiwan. Hopeful that this would remove the last obstacle to

²⁹³ TNA, CAB 148/117, DOP (71) 93, Memorandum, by Douglas-Home, 31 December 1971.

²⁹⁴ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 106, Douglas-Home to Washington, 17 January 1972.

²⁹⁵ TNA, CAB 148/117, DOP (71)93, 'Exchange of Ambassadors with China', A. Douglas-Home, 31 September 1971.

²⁹⁶ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 106, Telegram Douglas-Home to Washington, 17 January 1972.

an exchange of Ambassadors, the Foreign Office were also pleased that it did not completely shut the door on Taiwan. It did indicate a change of attitude as Britain was prepared to withdraw her Consulate from Taipei but it was not completely inconsistent with the public statements that the Government had previously made that the wishes of the inhabitants of Taiwan should be taken into account in any settlement of power. The Foreign Secretary also asserted that the wording would avoid embarrassment in the event of a declaration of independence by Taiwan. Britain planned to make a renewed approach to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), when the new Chargé d'Affaires, John Addis, was due to arrive in Beijing at the end of January. Indeed just a day after his arrival in Beijing, Addis met Han Xu, Chinese Chief of Protocol, "it was only a courtesy call, no business, but he went out of his way to be affable ... these courtesies are, of course, calculated. Perhaps next week I shall have the first substantive discussion which may affect the status of the Mission"²⁹⁷ Douglas-Home urged Addis to convince the Chinese that this was a genuine attempt by Britain to meet the Chinese position as, "we have gone a great deal further in meeting their views than they have done in meeting ours".²⁹⁸

The difficulties in attempting to find a compromise formula to describe the status of Taiwan were considerable. John Morgan, Head of the Far East Department, had the task of authorising the principles of the British statement, but obviously this had to suit both parties' needs. The issues involved were complex as they raised wider legal issues than Taiwan itself. Morgan thought that the words "province of China" could be open to interpretation; that they implied recognition of sovereignty. There was a difference in being aware, as a fact, of the effective administration of Taiwan by China and recognising, as a legal matter, the effective

²⁹⁷ London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Private Papers of Sir John Mansfield Addis [hereafter Addis Papers], DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 29 January 1972.

²⁹⁸ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 30, Douglas-Home to Addis, 24 January 1972.

administration of Taiwan as a province of China or an integral part of China.²⁹⁹ Morgan further noted, a legal parallel between the position of China in regard to Taiwan from 1945-49 with that of Israel and East Jerusalem. Israel was, in 1972, in military occupation of East Jerusalem. She had not, in law, annexed East Jerusalem any more than China had annexed Taiwan in 1945. She was effectively administering it as part of her territory and as a part of what she regarded as her capital. If, however, the British Government were to state publically that she recognised that East Jerusalem was effectively being administered as part of Israel's capital Jerusalem, the reactions from Arab countries would be strongly hostile. Morgan's conclusions were that Addis should meet the Chinese Ministers first and could subsequently propose a new form of vocabulary for the agreement.

In an attempt to continue the spirit of the Bermuda conference, Douglas-Home was keen to have clearance from both the White House and the State Department before Addis approached the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁰⁰ The initial response which came back from Henry Kissinger in January 1972 was that the United States Administration was "not exactly enthralled" at the prospect of the renewed approach to China but raised no objections to it.³⁰¹ Furthermore the White House thought it would be in the interests of neither of the two governments if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs found out that they had been discussing their respective China policies with each other. This was put down to the "neurotic anxiety" on the part of the White House with regards to their own relations with China, not wanting anything to affect their planned visit of the President to Beijing in February.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Letter, Morgan to Addis, 19 January 1972.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., Tel. no. 141, Douglas-Home to Washington, 20 January 1972.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 3/5, Tel. no. 232, Cromer to FCO, 22 January 1972.

³⁰² TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 208, Cromer to FCO, 20 January 1972.

On 26 January, John Addis formally presented himself as Britain's new Chargé d'Affaires at a meeting with Ji Bengfei, the recently appointed Chinese Foreign Minister. Addis reported that Ji desired an improvement in Sino-British relations and hoped they could work together to achieve this.³⁰³ In response to the Chinese Government's communication on 17 November 1971, Addis informed Ji, that the British Government was ready to proceed with further talks to come to an agreement, indeed that Addis had been instructed to work for this end by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. There was now only one phrase which separated them from an agreement on the exchange of Ambassadors, Ji stated, and "if this problem could be solved satisfactorily, other outstanding problems could also be solved".³⁰⁴ In preparing a new formula, Addis had to guard against the possibility of the Chinese adopting the view that if Britain were prepared to drop the "offensive phrase" (regarding the undetermined sovereignty of Taiwan) then she may be expected to go the whole way on "recognising" Taiwan as part of China.

A meeting with the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister, Qiao Guanhua, on 4 February proved inconclusive. Addis used his diplomatic skills to full effect, explaining that the British Government were prepared to focus on two principal points in the oral statement: A reaffirmation of the Potsdam and Cairo Declarations and that they considered the question of Taiwan to be a matter for the Chinese people themselves to settle. The Cairo Declaration, cited as Clause Eight of the Potsdam Declaration, which outlined the terms of Japanese surrender in 1945, stated that all territories Japan had won from China, including Taiwan, should be restored to the ROC. With these reaffirmations, along with the closure of the Consulate at Taipei, policy makers hoped that this would be seen to indicate a change of attitude on Britain's part thus encouraging more flexible negotiations from the Chinese side.

³⁰³ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 43, Addis to Douglas Home, 27 January 1972.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Tel. no. 43, Addis to Douglas-Home, 27 January 1972.

Qiao promised to study the communication and reply as soon as possible. The meeting, Addis later reflected, was “brief and business like ... he [Qiao] listened most attentively ... but did not reveal by the least sign what his reactions were”.³⁰⁵ By the 15 February no reply had been received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as President Nixon was expected to visit the next week (as arranged through Kissinger’s talks with Zhou Enlai the previous summer), it was assumed that Beijing would not reply until after they had reassessed their whole position on Taiwan in the light of their discussions with the President.³⁰⁶ Perhaps though, in a move which indicates Beijing’s eagerness for the situation to be resolved quickly and efficiently, and that the exchange of Ambassadors was still considered important even in the light of Nixon’s forthcoming visit, Addis was summoned at short notice to meet with Qiao on 18 February.

At the meeting Qiao pronounced that the undertaking of the British government to no longer say in public that the status of Taiwan was undetermined “was an advance and that it was welcomed by the Chinese Government”. He offered a revision of the supplementary text that the Chinese Government considered “entirely reasonable”. It stated that, “the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair and it is for the Chinese people themselves to settle it”. Addis wrote back to the Foreign Office urging them to,

Clinch the deal at once by accepting that the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair ... [for] I doubt that we should ever be able to get the Chinese to budge on this point. It seems significant that they have given us a chance to reach an agreement before the Nixon visit.³⁰⁷

The goal of exchanging Ambassadors seemed tantalisingly close. Douglas-Home immediately telegraphed Addis with the news that it was all acceptable except for the one

³⁰⁵ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel no. 77, Addis to FCO, 4 February 1972; also, Record of meeting by Addis, 4 February 1972.

³⁰⁶ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel no. 113, Addis to FCO, 15 February 1972.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 119, Addis to FCO, 18 February 1972.

word, “internal”. Meeting with Qiao the next day (19 February), Addis reported this conclusion. Qiao registered his “frank disappointment” with this development. As Addis had predicted, he was not prepared to “budge” on this matter.³⁰⁸ “We have come to the end of exploring this particular avenue”, he wrote back to Douglas-Home, “The choice I put before you therefore is the plain one between agreement to the Chinese wording and accepting an indefinite postponement of an exchange of Ambassadors”.³⁰⁹ The only alternative for Whitehall now was to go back to the original proposal for an acknowledgement of Taiwan as a province of China. In this case, no supplementary oral statement would be required but this, for the Foreign Office, was no easier to accept than agreeing that the Taiwan question was China’s internal affair. The next move in this diplomatic game was up to Britain. There was an anxious wait in Whitehall as President Nixon’s visit kept the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs busy. This in turn though did allow the Far Eastern Department time to ensure their next move was decisive, it was feared that Chinese attitudes may harden further as a result of the Nixon talks though it was difficult to predict what may happen as Michael Wilford, Assistant Under-Secretary to the Far East Department admitted that “I think it fair to say that we have not the least idea what America’s detailed policy in relation to China is”.³¹⁰

‘The week that changed the world’

President Nixon described his visit to the People’s Republic of China as “the week that changed the world”.³¹¹ His meetings with the Chinese leaders were given blanket coverage by the American media and the trip (21-28 February 1972), which culminated with the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué, was regarded as a political triumph, a sentiment echoed

³⁰⁸ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 120, Addis to Douglas-Home, 19 February 1972.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., Tel. no. 121, Addis to Douglas-Home, 19 February 1972.

³¹⁰ TNA, FCO 21/981, Minute, Wilford to Hankey, 22 February 1972.

³¹¹ Hamilton, ‘A “week that Changed the World”: Britain and Nixon’s China Visit of 21-28 February 1972’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, pp. 117-35 at p. 117; M. Macmillan, *Seize the Hour: When Nixon met Mao* (London: John Murray, 2006).

around the world.³¹² The historical significance of the event was never in doubt in Whitehall either, even if there were, as Lord Cromer, Britain's Ambassador to the United States, cynically remarked, a "distinct whiff of 'peace in our time' in the atmosphere".³¹³ This was a critically important moment in the early history of the Sino-American rapprochement. British officials took the view that, "more important than any specific point in the Communiqué is the fact that the meeting took place at all".³¹⁴ The Communiqué represented the normalisation of relations between the two countries and this was the vital issue that remained undiscussed.³¹⁵ Taken as a whole, the Foreign Office conceded that the Communiqué was constructive and forward looking and provided a good basis for the continuation of future Sino-American relations. Kissinger's methods and Nixon's conduct were, however, a cause of considerable "irritation" in London and did little to reassure British diplomats that the Special Relationship was alive and well.³¹⁶ Given that Britain still knew very little about Kissinger's first visit to Beijing in July 1971, Deputy Under-Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Stanley Tomlinson noted, "On the whole, the way the Peking visit was handled from the outset seems to me to provide a model of how the leading power in a great alliance ought not to act".³¹⁷ The Far Eastern Department resorted to sending to the American State Department a questionnaire, asking questions on the origins and significance of the Presidential visit and other questions such as: "Was Hong Kong mentioned? If so, in what connection and what was said?" and "Was there a Chinese view on (a) EEC enlargement? (b) The European security conference idea? (c) Has the Chinese view of NATO

³¹² TNA, FCO 21/828, Full text of the Joint Communiqué issued 27 February 1972.

³¹³ TNA, FCO 21/983, Tel. No. 729, Cromer to FCO, 1 March 1972.

³¹⁴ TNA, FCO 21/828, Tel. No. 144, Addis to FCO, 28 February 1972.

³¹⁵ Ambrose, *Nixon*, vol. 2, pp. 513-517.

³¹⁶ TNA, FCO 21/983, Letter, D. Greenhill to Cromer, 23 March 1972

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, minute by S. Tomlinson, 2 March 1972.

softened?”³¹⁸ The paper did however, reveal the matters of Sino-American relations on which the British felt themselves to be uninformed. Perhaps also, in a broader context, it illustrates that British global priorities were not with her former colonies but her future alliance partner of Europe, “Mr Nixon and Secretary Kissinger can speak eloquently about the indispensable American-European connection but their actions, particularly in crisis, do not match their words.”³¹⁹ In reply to the questionnaire, the State Department gave little indication that these matters were discussed, rather inferring that the Chinese desire to develop relations with the United States was to act as a counterweight to the Soviet Union and that the Nixon Administration welcomed the emergence of a multi-polar world. The Foreign Office welcomed the American evaluation of events but would have preferred access to more of the raw data on which it was based.³²⁰

A sixteen page despatch which Lord Cromer, Britain’s Ambassador to the United States, sent to London on 6 April, reviewing what Cromer termed, “the spectacular evolution of China policy under the present Administration”, described the visit by Nixon as “impressive yet bizarre”.³²¹ On the evidence so far, he thought it had hardly “changed the world”. There had, he believed, been no secret arrangement. Remarkable though it may have been that China had received Nixon, that Mao had endorsed the visit, and that the Communiqué had confirmed the principle of “normalisation”, Cromer emphasised that the same document had also spelled out major and continuing differences between the two countries. He was also of the opinion that the American administration had underestimated or chose to ignore the extent to which

³¹⁸ TNA, FCO 21/983, ‘Some Questions about President Nixon’s Visit to China and its Aftermath’, 1972.

³¹⁹ *The New York Times*, 31 Oct. 1973.

³²⁰ TNA, 21/983 FEC 3/304/2, Letter, Cromer to Greenhill, 16 March 1972; *Ibid.*, Tel no. 1124, Washington to FCO, 30 March 1972.

³²¹ TNA, FCO 21/981, Washington despatch, 6 April 1972; For more information on Cromer see A. Spelling, ‘Lord Cromer, 1971-74’ in M. Hopkins, S. Kelly and J.W. Young (eds.), *The Washington Embassy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 189-208.

its manner of proceeding could undermine confidence in the reliability of the United States. In pursuing good relations with China, Kissinger seemed to easily neglect the maintenance of good relations with Japan.³²²

After the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué and as part of the effort toward normalisation of Sino-American relations, the United States opened a Liaison Office in Beijing, on 1 May 1973, to handle all matters, except the strictly formal diplomatic aspects of the relationship.³²³ The People's Republic of China created a counterpart Chinese office in Washington, DC in the same year.

The impact of President Nixon's visit on Sino-British relations were quite substantial. At the request of American officials, the British government had delayed settling with the People's Republic on the upgrading of their representation in Beijing. However, the consequence to this was that Britain had been compelled to engage in discussions that they would have preferred to avoid over the jurisdiction of Taiwan. Britain also lost leverage in the negotiations when the Americans changed their voting perspective to seat China in the United Nations in 1971. Whitehall were left feeling bruised from the surprise of the visit. The Foreign Office predicted that, in the long term, Britain's trade with China may suffer at the expense of American competition but on the other hand, Britain's interests in Hong Kong were likely to benefit from any decrease in tension in the Pacific area that came as a consequence of the Sino-American rapprochement.

³²² TNA, FCO 21/981, Washington despatch, 6 April 1972.

³²³ J.A. Engel, (ed.), *The China Diary of George H.W. Bush: The Making of a Global President* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

The Exchange of Ambassadors

The visit of Richard Nixon to Beijing and the successful agreement of the Sino-American Communiqué had served the dual purpose of focussing the minds of the FCO policy makers and allowing them time for a decisive next move. The “Nixon week” had meant a suspension of all other activities on the political and official front in Beijing.³²⁴ John Morgan wrote to Addis explaining that Douglas-Home had been kept fully informed at all stages of the process and that he could also “regard the P.M. as our close comrade-in-arms”.³²⁵ The Foreign Office continued to keep the Americans informed of its China policy as the Foreign Secretary asked Addis to give a full account to the Americans of his recent two conversations with Qiao and to inform them of Whitehall’s intentions in the next meeting. It had been decided that Addis should approach the Chinese Foreign Ministry of Affairs on 3 March with a new proposal.

The breakthrough to negotiating terms which were mutually acceptable to both Beijing and London came during this review of negotiations. It had come to light that a Chinese translation of the agreement, issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rendered its meaning slightly differently in English when compared to the English text that Beijing was pushing. When translated the Chinese text read, “We think that the Taiwan Question is China’s internal affair to be settled by the Chinese people themselves”.³²⁶ The original English text had read, “We think that the Taiwan Question is China’s internal affair and to be settled by the people themselves”. The omission of the “and” in this statement from the previous English text avoided the sentence becoming two separate clauses which was more in

³²⁴ Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 29 February 1972.

³²⁵ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Letter, Morgan to Addis, 23 February 1972.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 133, Addis to Morgan, 24 February 1972.

line with the message which the Foreign Office was pushing for. Addis wrote to his wife describing the progress of dialogue, “only one word separates us now – literally so”.³²⁷

In the absence of any comments of substance from the White House regarding this new formula, the Foreign Office drew their own conclusions. While the passage on Taiwan in the Sino-American Communiqué did not commit the United States specifically to the proposition that the future of Taiwan was China’s internal affair, it did appear to go sufficiently far in that direction to make it difficult for the Americans to object strongly to London using their new proposed formula. Indeed, the re-statement in the Sino-American communiqué of the United States position on Taiwan compared interestingly with the British attitude as it would emerge from the recently tweaked Sino-British communiqué. The phraseology used to describe the American position even appeared to endorse the status quo rather than merely record the fact as the British were aiming to do.

The US acknowledge that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The US government does not challenge that position. Both the government of the People’s Republic of China and Taipei maintain that Taiwan is a part of China.³²⁸

The comparison between the language used in both cases suggested that Britain’s proposed formulation would still be attractive to the Chinese even following the limited understanding reached during the American talks with China. Therefore on 3 March, Addis met Qiao Guanhua to explain that Britain would accept the Chinese text without amendment and also felt justified in changing the English version slightly. Preliminary dates were also discussed for the time scales of the simultaneous announcements and signing of the agreements.³²⁹

³²⁷ Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 13 February 1972.

³²⁸ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Tel. no. 148, Addis to FCO, 1 March 1972.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, Tel. no. 168, Addis to FCO, 4 March 1972.

On 6 March Qiao received Addis at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and informed him, without any preliminaries, that the Chinese were content with the English version of the oral assurance.³³⁰ Qiao commented that the agreement “was something we could both be happy about” and that it would mark “the beginning of a development in relations”.³³¹ It was agreed that the Communiqué would be signed at 4PM (Beijing time) on 13 March, which would allow Douglas-Home to announce the agreement in the form of a statement to the House of Commons at 3.30 PM that same day.³³² There would also be an announcement of the appointment of John Addis as Ambassador to China at the same time as the publication of the Communiqué.³³³

When reflecting on the terms to which Britain had yielded in order to upgrade diplomatic relations with China, the Foreign Office thought that it might have been too steep a price to pay. China had piled pressure on Britain to conform to their stipulations with regard to the wording with a view to their future discussions with the United States and Japan. In the event, neither the Americans nor the Japanese were obliged to concede, as Britain did, that the Taiwan question was China’s internal affair, to be settled by the Chinese people themselves. Indeed Addis later reflected that Qiao’s satisfaction with the agreement on diplomatic relations might have been caused less by the fact that the agreement had been concluded than by the terms which he had succeeded in extracting for it.³³⁴ As signatories of the Cairo and Potsdam declarations Britain had been placed in a “special category” and it was thought that when the Americans came to the stage where they established diplomatic relations then they

³³⁰ Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 12 March 1972.

³³¹ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Record of meeting, Addis, 6 February 1972.

³³² Ibid., Tel. no. 174, Addis to Douglas-Home, 6 March 1972.

³³³ Ibid., Tel. no. 189, Addis to Douglas-Home, 9 March 1972; *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 833, cols. 31-35, 13 March 1972; *The Times*, 14 March 1972; *Hansard*, H.L. Deb., vol. 329, cols. 310-313, 14 March 1972.

³³⁴ TNA, FCO 21/1002 FEC 3/548/10, Letter, Addis to Evans, 18 May 1972.

may be asked to do the same. It was also acknowledged that Chinese relations with Japan had a degree of urgency that relations with the United Kingdom did not.³³⁵

The appointment of Britain's Ambassador to China

John Mansfield Addis formally presented his credentials as Britain's ambassador to China on 29 March, although a dinner had been held in his honour a day after the agreement had been signed, on 14 March, by Qiao at the Chinese Government Guest House. Qiao, who Addis described as "scintillating and provocative", had said that he wanted to "waive protocol and treat me [Addis] as Ambassador straightaway".³³⁶

Addis was born in 1914 and educated at Rugby and then at Christ Church College, Oxford. He joined the Diplomatic Service in 1938 and had great experience in dealing in Chinese matters having been First Secretary and Head of Chancery, HM Embassy Nanjing in 1947, and then transferring to the Embassy in Beijing in 1950 where he spent the next seven years. He took great pride in his work as Ambassador explaining to his wife that his job was "not only to represent Britain in China but also to explain the Chinese Government's attitudes to my Government".³³⁷

The appointment of China's Ambassador to Britain

The Chinese Chargé d'Affaires in London, Pei Jianzhang, met John Morgan, Head of the Far Eastern Department, on 8 May 1972 seeking agreement for the appointment of the new

³³⁵ TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, Addis, China: Annual Review for 1972, 8 January 1973.

³³⁶ TNA, FCO 21/1002 FEC 3/548/10, Tel. no. 203, Addis to FCO, 14 March 1972; Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 14 March 1972; Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 10 December 1972.

³³⁷ Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 1 April 1972.

Chinese Ambassador to Britain, Song Zhiguang.³³⁸ Song was born in April 1916 in Guandong province, China. Little was known by the Foreign Office of Song except that he had served as Deputy Director of the West European Department at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1958-1963, and was subsequently Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Paris, where he was regarded as “the real brain of the Chinese Embassy”.³³⁹ He had been serving as Chinese Ambassador to East Germany since 1970.³⁴⁰ He was the first Chinese ambassador to Great Britain since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and was accompanied by his wife, Zang Ru, in London.

The Consular Convention in China

The Sino-British agreement to exchange Ambassadors instigated a “honeymoon period” in relations which prompted the Foreign Office to consider setting up a Consular Convention with China. A Consular Agreement would indeed mark a further step forward in Britain’s relations with China. the object of such an agreement would be provide a formal framework for relations in the Consular field, to define Consular rights, privileges and immunities, to establish and improve facilities for the mutual protection of each state’s nationals, their property and other interests, including early notification in cases where nationals of one country fall into difficulties in the territory of the other. By laying down agreed procedures that such an agreement would contribute to the solution of problems within these fields, and thus minimise the risk of disagreement between our two countries arising from what ought to be routine matters. China had concluded Consular Treaties with East Germany and the Soviet Union in 1959 and with Czechoslovakia in 1960.³⁴¹ The Foreign Office was careful to tread lightly here, to put its terms too boldly to the Chinese may cause them to be unreceptive to

³³⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1002 FEC 3/548/10, Tel. no. 303, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 9 May 1972.

³³⁹ Ibid., Tel. no. 423, Addis to FCO, 11 May 1972.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., Tel. no. 416, Addis to FCO, 9 May 1972.

³⁴¹ TNA, FCO 21/997, Tel. no. 771, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 3 October 1972.

the proposal. They advised that Addis should talk in general terms in order to gauge their primary reactions.³⁴²

The improvement in Sino-British relations had been followed by many more Britons visiting China than before, with some staying as temporary residents. A Consular Convention with China would help to provide a certain amount of cover for them, particularly in the “not unlikely event” of further upheavals like the Cultural Revolution.³⁴³ Therefore Addis proposed that he seek a meeting with the Head of the Chinese Consular Department to suggest that they enter negotiations for the conclusion of a Consular Convention covering, in its main points, access to detained British citizens, protection of British citizens and property, early notification where British subjects are in distress and Consular privileges and immunities (both staff and documents) with reciprocal facilities for the Chinese in the UK. It was decided that it would be worthwhile to discuss this with the Chinese before preparing a draft document to submit for the meeting. It was thought that a bilateral convention may be more appealing to the Chinese as they did not subscribe to the Vienna Convention on Consular Rights and were not expected to recognise the Convention as long as Taiwan were a signatory on it. It was then suggested that it may be appropriate for Alec Douglas-Home to include this matter in his discussion with the Chinese authorities during his visit to Beijing in October.³⁴⁴ It could prove to be a useful addition to the March Communiqué, representing a concrete agreement on the matter and underlining the growing normalisation of relations between the two countries.

³⁴² TNA, FCO 21/997, Tel. no. 771, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 3 October 1972.

³⁴³ Ibid., Letter, Morgan to Russell, 19 September 1972.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., Tel. no. 766, Douglas-Home to Addis, 29 September 1972.

The British Consulate-General in Shanghai had been requisitioned by the Chinese authorities, during the Cultural Revolution, in September 1967. At that time the British authorities reserved their rights to the property and to compensation for any loss or damage incurred.³⁴⁵ With the exchange of Ambassadors on 13 March 1972, the question was once again raised as to whether the Foreign Office would seek to reopen it.³⁴⁶ Michael Morgan, Counsellor to China, was quite firm in his reply. It was agreed that there was no case to reopen the Shanghai Consulate at that time. Although there were British subjects living in Shanghai, it was not considered a large enough number to justify a Consular post.³⁴⁷ Looking to the future it was confirmed that even if they were to reopen a post there, the old British compound would not be suitable and new premises would be sought. However, it did raise the issue of negotiating compensation terms for the old Consulate and those others that Britain had given up, such as in Guangzhou and Yichang. This would involve ongoing negotiations with Chinese and was not presumed to be a pressing matter.³⁴⁸ For the foreseeable future, Britain was content to keep solely the Embassy in Beijing as her main office of residence in China.

Representation of British Consular interests in Taiwan

With regard to the British Consul in Taiwan, Whitehall dismissed suggestions that it had “abandoned” Taiwan. The British government did not, and had not since 1950, recognised the Nationalist authorities on Taiwan. Furthermore, the continued presence of an embassy there had never implied recognition. The British Consuls there had done business only with the local provincial authorities and had no dealings with the Nationalist authorities in Taipei. The Consulate at Tamsui and the Office of the Consulate at Taipei were scheduled to close for business seven days after the announcement with the People’s Republic of China to

³⁴⁵ TNA, FO 676/ 567, 3/16, Tel. no. 150, Douglas-Home to Samuel, 8 March 1971.

³⁴⁶ TNA, FCO 21/997, Letter, Morgan to Addis, 22 March 1972.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter, Morgan to R. Evans, 19 June 1972.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter, Morgan to Evans, 19 June 1972.

exchange Ambassadors.³⁴⁹ The withdrawal of the British-based staff was expected to be completed within six weeks. The issue of visas for Hong Kong and colonial territories was one of the Consulate's busiest tasks and so that responsibility would now fall to the Immigration Department in Hong Kong (for Taiwanese wishing to visit Hong Kong and the UK). Another concern was how best to support British firms wishing to do business with Taiwan but it was pointed out that other trade competitors such as the West Germans, whose trade with Taiwan was larger than Britain's at this time, had no form of resident representation.³⁵⁰ For all other matters, the Australian Government had undertaken to assume informal responsibility for the protection of Britain's remaining interests in Taiwan.³⁵¹

However, after a December 1972 electoral victory for the Labour Party in Australia, its Leader, Gough Whitlam, carried through on his manifesto promise to recognise the People's Republic of China and so withdrew the Australian representation from Taipei. Britain had to ask someone else to look after residual interests there. A formal approach to the American State Department asking the United States Government to assume informal responsibilities for British Consular interests in Taiwan was successful.³⁵²

Diplomatic relations following the exchange of Ambassadors

In order to follow up the exchange of telegrams between the Chinese Premier and the British Prime Minister in which they talked of good relations between their two countries, Ambassador John Addis requested a meeting with Zhang Wenjin, Director of the Western

³⁴⁹ *The Times*, 14 March, 1972.

³⁵⁰ TNA, FO 676/567, 3/16, Douglas-Home replying to Tilney in supplementary questions, 13 March 1972.

³⁵¹ TNA, FCO 21/997, Guidance Paper, 9 March 1972; see also TNA, FO 676/567, 3/16, Douglas-Home replying to Walker-Smith in supplementary questions, 13 March 1972.

³⁵² TNA, FCO 21/1017 FEC 3/548/1, Tel. no. 2493, Douglas-Home to Washington, 5 December 1972.

European and American Department in Beijing. This was granted on 27 March 1972 where the tone of conversation was “exceptionally amicable throughout, even by Zang’s own civilised standards”.³⁵³ The purpose of the meeting was to undertake a general review of bilateral matters in order that concrete proposals could be made to further solidify relations. Addis first mentioned the possibility of Ministerial visits and official visits at high level. These were welcomed by both sides although when considering exchanges in specialist fields outside Sino-British commercial relations, such as ballet, opera and art exhibitions, these would probably take longer to implement on the Chinese side as they had not yet settled into their own political attitude to the type and extent of such contacts after the Cultural Revolution.³⁵⁴ Zhang raised the issue of Chinese representation in Hong Kong. He said that it was an “old question but a matter to be taken up in the light of the new relations between the two countries”.³⁵⁵ At that point, affairs which involved the Hong Kong authorities and China were taken up by the central Government, with some issues being dealt with by the local authorities. Premier Zhou Enlai had asked Zhang to enquire whether it would be possible for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to send an official representative to Hong Kong. The next day Addis met the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ji Bengfei, who wished to congratulate him on his appointment as the first Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China.³⁵⁶ On 29 March 1972 Addis met the Acting Chairman of the People’s Republic of China, Dong Biwu, for half an hour, who revealed to Addis that the administration was aware of and appreciated Addis’ long experience of China. He continued that they looked forward to having a “frank and friendly” relationship with him and would “always welcome” his advice and observations on what he found in the People’s Republic.³⁵⁷ Again the subject of

³⁵³ TNA, FO 676/567, 3/16, Tel. no. 247, Addis to FCO, 27 March 1972.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Record of meeting, Addis, 27 March 1972.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Hong Kong arose. Although Dong merely stated that he thought there were “still certain questions to be settled” between Britain and China particularly in regard to Hong Kong and he hoped that these could be settled during Addis’ time in China.

The Far East Department did maintain a modicum of caution in dealing with China. When a letter from Stephen Hawker, Head of Intelligence Staff, arrived at the Ministry of Defence and was subsequently passed on to the Foreign Office, delighting in a story where Chinese news editors had spoken very highly of the improving relationship between Britain and China, Richard Evans attached a handwritten note simply saying, “We mustn’t let ourselves get dizzy”.³⁵⁸ The most immediate diplomatic decision made after the exchange of Ambassadors was to instigate arrangements for Prime Minister Edward Heath to visit China and cement the new phase in relations.³⁵⁹ Anthony Royle and Alec Douglas-Home also planned official visits as well as invitations being extended to Chinese delegations to visit Britain.

In June, Addis described to Richard Evans at the Far Eastern Department, a conversation he had had with the Algerian Ambassador in Beijing who was particularly close to Vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua. Firstly, it was reported that Qiao had reflected that

The Chinese Government had had more success in handling bilateral matters with Conservative than Labour Governments, even though the latter professed a kind of Marxism. He also said that there were positive aspects in some of the present attitudes of Mr Heath’s Government. “Positive” as you know is rather high praise in such a context.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, letter D.S. Hawker to Ministry of Defence, “Sino-UK Relations”, 12 June 1972 and TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, Memorandum, M.O.D. to Davies, “Sino-UK Relations”, 21 June 1972 (handwritten note by Evans dated 28 June 1972).

³⁵⁹ TNA, FO 676/567, 3/16, Letter, M.O’D. Alexander to T. Bridges, 7 March 1972.

³⁶⁰ TNA, FCO 21/989 FEC 3/548/1, Letter, Addis to Evans, 18 May 1972.

These “positive aspects” included Britain’s entry to the European Economic Community (EEC). For Addis also learned that China had revised their view “a year or so ago”; in January 1964 China believed France was the country of Western Europe most likely to take the lead in influencing the other members of the EEC in forming their foreign political attitudes and the country to which China should pay the most attention. In 1972, China reckoned that on Britain’s entry into the Common Market, she would naturally take the lead in European matters. Addis reflected,

It is rather gratifying to think that the Chinese may have given their apple to us as the power most likely to succeed in Western Europe. If there is anything in this view, it may in part explain Chou En-lai’s ... policy decision in the spring of last year to take the initiative in pushing forward the improvement of diplomatic relations between our two countries.³⁶¹

A new period in Sino-British relations had begun.

³⁶¹ TNA, FCO 21/989 FEC 3/548/1, Letter, Addis to Evan, 13 June 1972.

Chapter Four: The Heath Government and China 1972-1974

“It has been an eventful year” noted John Addis, Britain’s first Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China, while describing Sino-British affairs in 1972.³⁶² Indeed it proved a “crucial” period in which diplomatic relations between the two countries had developed rapidly. The Sino-British agreement to exchange Ambassadors was signed on 13 March 1972, the major concession for which had been on Britain’s part, where the Foreign Office had agreed to give up the formula used for twenty two years, that juridically Britain regarded the status of Taiwan as undetermined. Ministers had decided that this was the price worth paying for the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China. The strongest argument being that without an exchange of Ambassadors it would be impossible for Ministers of the two sides to meet for discussion of world affairs which would place Britain at a serious disadvantage in the evolving situation in Asia. This policy was quickly justified. The period 1972-74 was rich in Ministerial, cultural and commercial exchanges.

Developing Sino-British contacts 1972

The Chinese showed themselves keen to receive British visitors, though because of the continuing disorganisation of the Chinese administration in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, and also the advancing years of the higher echelons of their government, they were not as ready to send Chinese visitors to Britain. Other cultural and political visits cemented this stage of development in the rapport between the two countries; contacts with officials at all levels in 1972 were “easier, franker and more cordial” than in previous

³⁶² TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, J.M. Addis, “China: Annual Review for 1972”, 8 January 1973.

years.³⁶³ On 28 March, Gladys Yang, one of four British detainees still held in China, was released which ameliorated any Sino-British tensions further. There was a wide variety of delegations visiting China throughout the whole year: The London Chamber of Commerce delegation led by Lord Ebbisham visited 14-29 April; The President of the Royal Society, Sir Alan Hodgkin, led a three-man delegation, 20-30 May, to Beijing as guests of the Chinese Academy of Sciences; Professor Dorothy Hodgkin visited, 5-20 August, also as a guest of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a nine-man delegation of scientists led by Professor Bei Shizhang paid a return visit to London later in the year, 6-20 October, at the invitation of the Royal Society. The Amalgamated Engineering Workers Union led by Executive Secretary J Boyd and including President, Hugh Scanlon, visited China, 11-29 September. A start was made in exchanges of students and a group of fifteen Chinese students of English left China in December 1971 to continue their studies in London. The year was rounded off with a visit of a 25 man delegation from The 48 Group Club (21 November – 2 December) which is an independent business network committed to promoting positive relations with China.

The Great Britain-China Centre

On 28 September 1971, John Morgan, Head of the Far Eastern Department, called a meeting, which included representatives of the Permanent Under-Secretaries Department and the Information Research Department at the Foreign Office, Eric Vines of the Cultural Exchange Department and Ian Williams, Head of the East Europe Department.³⁶⁴ Morgan began the meeting by explaining that recent developments with China on the cultural and scientific front suggested that Britain was approaching a similar position to that in her relations with the Soviet Union in 1959-60 when the Great Britain-USSR Association was set up. A need had arisen for an organisation to deal with the cultural and similar exchanges between Britain

³⁶³ FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, Annual Review, Addis, 8 January 1973.

³⁶⁴ TNA, BW 2/769, Brief, Williams, 29 September 1971.

and China, as our cultural relations were expanding. As examples of these recent developments he mentioned the Chinese proposal to send a large song and dance company to Britain early next year, the recent agreement on exchanges between the Royal Society and the Chinese Academy and the current Festival of Chinese Films at several Classic cinemas in London and which was being sponsored by the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU). For several reasons Deputy Under-Secretary Stanley Tomlinson felt it undesirable that SACU should come to be regarded by the Chinese as the only Sinophile society through which they could work, but this was inevitable unless there was a viable alternative body. SACU, after an encouraging start some six years ago had become more and more a vehicle for Chinese government propaganda and a forum for British political sympathisers, receiving funds from the Chinese Embassy.³⁶⁵

It was generally agreed at the meeting that a new body was required. Williams outlined the history of both the GB-USSR Association and the GB-East Europe Centre. In both instances the British Council had provided part-time assistance with staff and services until the GB-USSR Association and the GB-East Europe Centre became fully fledged. It was also agreed that there would be a great deal of public interest in any new body dealing with China and that there would be no problem in getting eminent sponsors. In a letter to John Henniker, Head of the British Council, to garner support, Tomlinson mentioned that no names had been thought of for the organisation as yet but that the title 'Great Britain-China Committee' was being used only to avoid confusion with other existing organisations.

In the light of the improvement in relations between Britain and China, exemplified by the exchange of ambassadors, the Foreign Office considered that there was a need for an

³⁶⁵ TNA, BW 2/769, Letter, Tomlinson to Henniker, 8 October 1971.

organisation to facilitate cultural and similar exchanges between Britain and China. The objectives of the Great Britain-China Committee were: firstly to encourage and facilitate exchanges and to improve relations generally between Britain and China; secondly, to consider inviting Chinese personalities to Britain as its guests and encouragement of appropriate visits to China; thirdly, to act as a focal point for the discussion of ways of promoting closer understanding and closer cultural, economic, political, social and sporting contacts between the peoples of Britain and China. Sir Harold Thompson, a member of the British Council's Executive Committee who had a great interest in China, accepted the chairmanship of the Committee. It was also envisaged that the Committee would also include representatives of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties as well as of the Royal Society, The British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Universities.

Initially, the Committee would be under the aegis of the British Council who agreed to provide and house the secretariat.³⁶⁶ As cultural relations developed, consideration would be given to the appointment of a full time executive secretary and separate premises. It was proposed that the organisation would then become open to individual or corporate membership on the basis of subscription. The setting up of the Great Britain-China Committee was seen as a further mark of the good relations between the two countries and would look forward to close and cordial cooperation with the Embassy of the Chinese People's Republic.³⁶⁷ The Committee was announced to the House of Commons on 27 March 1972. The Great Britain-China Committee held its first meeting on 12 June and proposals for future action by the Committee were discussed at the meeting which Sir Harold Thompson later put to the Chargé d'Affaires, Pei Jianzhang, when he called on him on 27 June.

³⁶⁶ TNA, BW2/769, Tel no. 167, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 17 March 1972.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., Aide Memoire, undated.

Meetings of the Governing Body would be quarterly and efforts would be made to gain the confidence and understanding of the Chinese authorities in London.

Visit of Anthony Royle to China

When Anthony Royle, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, visited China from 30 May to 7 June 1972, he became the first Minister from the Foreign Office to visit China since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. It also marked the first visit to China by any British Minister since that by the President of the Board of Trade, Douglas Jay, in 1964. Royle's visit formed part of an exchange of visits with Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Qiao Guanhua. The objectives of Royle's trip were primarily to improve and develop Sino-British bilateral relations, to maintain and encourage peace and prosperity in Hong Kong and to increase Britain's exports to China.³⁶⁸ The reward for establishing full diplomatic relations was clear from this visit. Royle met Qiao four times, in meetings cumulatively lasting ten hours. The talks covered a range of issues, beginning on bilateral issues, including Hong Kong and moving on to cover a thorough review of Europe, India, Japan, Korea, the Middle East and also China's position as a nuclear power. Addis described the two men as having

a real meeting of minds ... there was commendable frankness on both sides ... at the same time, on the Chinese side as well as our own, [there was] a willingness to recognise the areas where there can be common ground between the policies of our two Governments and to search out the ways in which there can be useful cooperation between us.³⁶⁹

On the wider questions of world peace and Chinese nuclear strategy the recurrent theme was Chinese concern at the rivalry for hegemony between the two superpowers. China saw scope for indulging in diplomacy in the European Union in order to strengthen Europe's opposition to the Soviet Union's insidious policies of détente. The Chinese line of foreign policy

³⁶⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1001 FEC 3/548/9, Brief, FCO, undated.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., Letter, Addis to Douglas-Home, 23 June 1972.

described Europe as being the focal point of contention for hegemony between the two super powers. Britain then, held an especially special position in the Chinese view, both as an element capable of strengthening European Union and as being sceptical towards Soviet advances.³⁷⁰ The talks clearly brought out the Chinese Government's respect for the British Conservative government. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai commented approvingly on Heath's forward-looking policies which he considered much clearer than those of his predecessor Harold Wilson.³⁷¹ Addis and the Foreign Office exploited this arrangement both to the advantage of Britain but it was also an opportunity for the Foreign Office to work towards the sort of world it would have liked to see emerging. It was an opportunity that Britain could use to the utmost while it lasted: to help benefit the economy, to benefit Hong Kong and to establish the cultural links, which may, in the long run, affect China's world outlook.³⁷²

Visit of Alec Douglas-Home to China

Relations between Britain and China were cemented further when, on 11 May 1972 Prime Minister Heath announced in the House of Commons that the Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home had agreed, in principle, to accept an invitation to visit China and a similar invitation had been accepted, in principle, by , the Chinese Foreign Minister.³⁷³ The exchange of visits was seen as a logical development of improved Sino-British relations following the exchange of ambassadors on 13 March.³⁷⁴ Although the negotiations had been going on for weeks by this time, *The Times* reported the significance of the timing, announced, as it was, against the background of the Vietnam War. It was the first visit to China of a British Foreign Secretary since Lord Palmerston.

³⁷⁰ *The Economist*, 4 November 1972, p. 54

³⁷¹ TNA, FCO 21/1001 FEC 3/548/9, Brief, FCO, undated.

³⁷² TNA, FCO 21/1228, FEC 1/6, Diplomatic Report No. 286/74, John Addis, 14 June 1974.

³⁷³ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 836, cols. 1545-7, 11 May 1972; see also *The Times*, 12 May 1972; see also TNA, FCO 21/992, FEC 3/548/6.

³⁷⁴ TNA, CAB 128/52, CM(73)33, 21 June 1973.

The main purpose of the visit of 29 October – 2 November, was to make clear the importance that the British Government attached to consolidating and building on the improvement in relations with the Government of the People's Republic of China.³⁷⁵ Later, however, Douglas-Home claimed that one of the main purposes of the visit was to “discover the real reasons which underlay the quarrel between Communist China and Communist Russia”.³⁷⁶ The Foreign Office had always advocated the need for China to develop “normal relations” with the West and so welcomed this advance. The Secretary of State also hoped to emphasise to the Chinese his interest in expanding trade; to encourage more trade missions in both directions. Competition with other Western countries was intense and so the Sino-British Trade Council played an important role in this field. One industry which Douglas-Home would be pushing was aviation. Britain wanted to see the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) flying to China and the Civil Aviation Association of China (CAAC) flying to Britain, but this would need an Air Services Agreement and no arrangements had yet been made for full-scale negotiations.

The British deliberately chose to keep this first visit by a British Foreign Secretary to China a low key affair; formalities were kept simple and ceremonies reduced to a minimum, it was hoped this would ensure greater success. The trip consisted of leisurely paced talks, tours of the Forbidden City and the Great Wall culminating in a meeting with Zhou Enlai.³⁷⁷ But it also produced discussions on every major international issue plus a package of agreements on cultural exchange.³⁷⁸ Douglas-Home told the Chinese that the visit marked,

³⁷⁵ TNA, FCO 21/993 FEC 3/548/6, Letter, Hervey to Wilford, 27 September 1972.

³⁷⁶ Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, p. 269.

³⁷⁷ TNA, FCO 21/995, FEC 3/548/6, Tel no. 1134, Addis to FCO, 25 October 1972.

³⁷⁸ *The Economist*, 4 November 1972, p. 56.

A new, constructive, and I believe, a highly significant development in the relations between Britain and China. We do not need to disguise the fact that the past history of Anglo-Chinese relations has been chequered. We can and we must learn from the past: but it is the present and above all the future that concern us now ... We for our part are determined that the resulting improvement [after exchanging ambassadors] shall be beneficial to both sides, enduring, constructive and, I hope, a contribution in its own right to peace in the world.³⁷⁹

Three sessions of talks were held with Ji Bengfei, the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs. In addition Douglas-Home had meetings with Bei Xiangguo, Minister of Foreign Trade, and with Prime Minister Zhou. The talks, Douglas-Home reported, touched on all aspects of international affairs and were “extremely useful” in providing the first opportunity for direct discussions between the Foreign Ministers of Britain and China since the Geneva Conferences of 1954 and 1961-2. These talks had taken place at a crucial moment in the affairs of South-East Asia and the Far East. On bilateral issues between Britain and China, the Foreign Secretary underlined Britain’s desire to see closer contacts at all levels.

Trade

In July 1972 it was reported to a Chinese Conference that one of Beijing’s primary tasks of foreign policy was,

Through development of relations with Western European countries to reinforce the international position of the PRC, to speed up the growth of military-industrial and, in particular, rocket and nuclear potential. Official Chinese representatives expressly declare that they are determined to draw on the scientific-technical and technological experience of the USA, Japan and Western European countries.³⁸⁰

Important prospects opened for the sale of British aircraft and aviation material to China in 1972. Twenty Trident aircraft and in a deal in conjunction with the French, three Concorde were sold to the Chinese during the year. On 7 August, a contract for the sale of six Trident

³⁷⁹ TNA, FCO 21/944, FEC 3/548/6, Tel no. 1032, Addis to FCO, 13 October 1972.

³⁸⁰ Cold War International History Project (Online Archive), ‘Information from consultative meeting about China, 3-5 July 1972, on International Policy and Internal Situation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) Under Current Conditions’ at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/digital-archive> accessed on 18 October 2011.

aircraft was signed in Beijing between China and Hawker Siddeley Aviation Ltd and, on 9 November, a contract for the sale of a further eight Trident aircraft was signed. Rolls Royce opened discussions which were hoped would lead to cooperation in the development of an aero-engine industry in China. The Chinese had decided to embark on an extended aviation policy beginning with a long-distance international service and seemed to take the long-view and were reluctant to depend on either of the two super-powers for the supply of aircraft. Fortunately for Britain, she provided the only alternative for long-distance aircraft, even if at a great price. This was seen as a major opportunity for British industry which could have important effects over the next one or two decade. Indeed on 12 September it was announced that China would purchase ten Boeing 707 aircraft with Rolls Royce engines. Exports to China in 1972 were slightly up on 1971 but still represented a trough between the period when Britain were selling large quantities of non-ferrous metals on the London Metal Exchange and the time when the delivery of the aircraft which had been ordered were reflected in the trade returns.

On 29 December the Chinese Ambassador to Great Britain, Song Zhiguang, held a meeting with Denis Greenhill, the Permanent Under-Secretary, and asked what the British side had in mind for the further development of Sino-British relations in 1973.³⁸¹ Greenhill stated that Britain hoped to continue with Ministerial visits in both directions and was also optimistic for increased contacts both commercial and political with China. He also emphasised the Foreign Office desire to continue political discussions on international affairs. Song reported that the Chinese government was satisfied with recent actions by the Hong Kong Government against Soviet and Kuomintang spies and that these actions displayed a “friendly attitude” towards

³⁸¹ TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, Tel no. 1176, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 29 December 1972.

China.³⁸² Song then referred to the question of Chinese official representation in Hong Kong. He enquired whether there had been any developments since Douglas-Home had discussed the matter with the Chinese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in Beijing. Song thought that the British side “did not fully understand and had misgivings about Chinese policies and working style”, he reiterated that Chinese representation in Hong Kong could only help stability there and relations between Britain and China. Greenhill, however, emphasised the problems which the proposal raised for Britain and explained that if any changes did occur the consideration would have to be “long and careful”.³⁸³ By the end of 1972 both China and Britain expressed satisfaction with the events of the past year, with a mutual desire to continue discussions on international affairs.³⁸⁴

“A catalogue of successes”: Sino-British relations in 1973

Sino-British relations in 1973 were described by British Ambassador Addis as being “a catalogue of successes”.³⁸⁵ By the end of the year he described how many of the “irritants” in the bilateral relationship “had been removed”. By this he was partly alluding to the release of the three remaining British subjects detained in Chinese prisons on 27 January. Also though, a number of practical matters affecting Hong Kong were discussed in a “sensible” way and the Chinese had been accommodating over some issues, however they maintained their request for an official representative in Hong Kong, which Britain continued to refuse. Despite these tensions, the Foreign Office was careful in its continued discussions with China to maintain the increasingly cordial diplomatic exchanges.

³⁸² Ibid., Tel no. 1176, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 29 December 1972.

³⁸³ TNA, FCO 21/1087, FEC 1/3, Tel no. 1176, Douglas-Home to Beijing, 29 December 1972.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., Tel no. 1176, MacLeose to Douglas-Home, 29 December 1972.

³⁸⁵ TNA, FCO 21/1226, Diplomatic Report No. 22/74, 31 December 1974.

The Chinese Minister for Foreign Trade visited London in January and in return Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and Michael Heseltine, Minister for Aerospace visited China 24-31 March.³⁸⁶ Their visit was in connection with the British Industrial Technology Exhibition (26 March – 7 April), the largest to have been held in China. The two British Ministers were received by Zhou Enlai on 27 March and indeed the Chinese Premier visited the exhibition on 31 March along with Vice-Premier Li Xiannian and a large group of Ministers and Vice-Ministers. British exports to China expanded from £31.5 million in 1972 to £80 million in 1973. By the end of the year, contracts included Trident aircraft, chemical fibres, machinery and technology. Kenneth Keith, Chairman of Rolls Royce, also visited Beijing, 12-17 March, to have discussions with the Chinese aviation industry. Foreign Office officials hoped these talks would lead to Britain becoming China's principal supplier of engines over the forthcoming decade. The British Air Services Agreement Negotiating Team were in Beijing, 27 May – 14 June, which resulted in the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) achieving a trunk route into China. The agreement was initialled on 13 June but the Chinese later raised a difficulty over the operations of Taiwan's "China Air Lines".³⁸⁷

Ji Bengfei, the Chinese Foreign Minister, who had to put off his visit in February because of the Paris Conference on Vietnam, came to London 6-10 June. His "relaxed and frank manner" in talks marked how far the two countries had progressed in establishing the relations of "understanding and respect" of which Douglas-Home had spoken about during his visit to China in 1972. On 8 June the Prime Minister received Ji who took this opportunity to issue an official invitation from Zhou Enlai to Edward Heath to visit China. On his return

³⁸⁶ TNA, FCO 21/1115 FEC 6/548/13, Report on the visit to China of Walker and Heseltine, 19 April 1973.

³⁸⁷ TNA, FCO 21/1226, Diplomatic Report No. 22/74, 31 December 1974.

to China, British Ambassador John Addis hosted a dinner for Ji in order to “keep up momentum” in the bilateral relationship.³⁸⁸ Both sides agreed that this visit had been a great success and the Chinese delegation had thoroughly enjoyed it.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra visited China, 17-26 March, performing in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. This was the first Western orchestra to play in China since the Cultural Revolution, a fact that the music-loving Prime Minister Edward Heath relished in, “I am delighted that it should be a British orchestra which leads the world in this respect”.³⁸⁹ The first performance in Beijing was broadcast live on Chinese television. The concerts were sold out and so the orchestra also admitted people to watch their rehearsals. The arts policy of the Chinese Government in 1973 strictly limited Chinese orchestras to play but a handful of Revolutionary works. The depth, style and content of the symphonies played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra were, therefore a great draw to the crowds. The tour promoted good relations between the British Embassy and the Chinese Government but it was also the occasion for successful “people to people” exchanges.³⁹⁰ The Chinese made great efforts to ensure the success of the visit and John Addis, Britain’s Ambassador in Beijing, “saw the visit as more than a highly successful cultural event; the Chinese response to it made it a political event of deep significance”.³⁹¹

Chinese acrobats who were visiting Britain for three weeks, played to full houses in London, (30 June – 24 July) and the Chinese Exhibition, which ran from 26 September to 10 October was opened in London by the Prime Minister on 28 September and attended by a Chinese

³⁸⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1106 FEC 3/548/1, Letter, Addis to Wilford, 9 July 1973. See also, Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 1 August 1972 and 10 December 1972.

³⁸⁹ TNA, FCO 34/219 PW 7/301/1, Letter, Heath to Bravington, 1 March 1973.

³⁹⁰ Addis Papers, DDPM 25, Letter, J. Addis to R. Addis, 3 April 1973; TNA, FCO 21/1226, Diplomatic Report No. 22/74, 31 December 1974.

³⁹¹ TNA, FCO 34/219 PW 7/301/1, Letter, Addis to Douglas-Home, 17 April 1973.

Cultural delegation led by Wang Yejiu, Director of the Chinese Bureau of Historical Relic Administration. The exhibition of Chinese excavated material September broke all attendance records.

The Royal Society began successful exchanges with the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Throughout the year 115 Chinese students had travelled to Britain to improve their English, staying with British families. On 5 October, eleven British post-graduate students attended the Beijing Linguistics Institute. The British Council provided an invaluable launching and receiving platform at the London end. The aim of these cultural exchanges was to “open a number of windows into China ... to get some fresh breezes blowing” and to show the Chinese that, for this kind of contact and exchange, Britain can provide a better service than other countries.³⁹² It was thought of as a long term policy which could have great importance in subsequent generations and it was felt by Addis as though a good start had been made.³⁹³

Perhaps the event which highlighted the strengthened bilateral relations and yet which still exposed the weaknesses was the planning of the Prime Minister’s visit to China. There had been a good build up for his meeting with Zhou Enlai and great things were expected of it.

Planning for Prime Minister Heath to visit China

At a meeting with China’s Ambassador to Britain, Song Zhiguang, on 5 July, the Prime Minister was able to express his appreciation of the fruits of cultural exchanges between the two countries, as, the previous evening, he had attended a performance by the Shanghai Acrobatic Troupe.³⁹⁴ The purpose of the meeting, Ambassador Song explained, was that he

³⁹² FCO 21/1226, Diplomatic Report No. 22/74, 31 December 1974.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Record of Conversation Heath and Sung, 5 July 1973.

wished to formalise a date for the Prime Minister's visit to China, also enquiring how long he would like to stay for and the places he would like to visit outside of Beijing. It was later decided by Heath that, as he would not be entering the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race that year, the period after Christmas would be clear for the visit and so the dates 2-10 January 1974 were allocated as "possible dates".³⁹⁵ Heath also expressed willingness for his itinerary to include not only scenic and historic features of China but also something of "modern Chinese life".³⁹⁶

Others in Europe were also pursuing closer ties with China and in September 1973 French President Georges Pompidou visited China for six days. It was the first visit to China by a French head of State and also the first by any representative of a European Government. After Pompidou's visit, Edward Tomkins, Britain's ambassador to France, arranged a meeting with Geoffroy de Courcel, the Secretary-General at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to ascertain the scope of the Sino-French talks. De Courcel informed Tomkins that the talks had been frank but also that "the atmosphere had been very good and the Chinese were extremely warm and friendly".³⁹⁷ It had been a "successful visit which had achieved what it wanted to achieve", culminating in the signing of a joint Communiqué.³⁹⁸ A letter from Pompidou to Heath confirmed this account of the meetings, whilst also informing the British Prime Minister that, in his meeting with Chairman Mao on 12 September, Pompidou found the Chinese leader to be knowledgeable in European matters and that he viewed the EEC as a "positive element" allowing member states to develop "friendly relations in every field".³⁹⁹ In a later meeting between Heath and Pompidou, the French President gave a good

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter FERB to Grattan, 20 August 1973.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Tel no. 1233, Tomkins to FCO, 20 September 1973.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Full text of the Sino-French Communiqué, signed 14 September 1973.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter, Pompidou to Heath, 4 October 1973.

account of the personalities of both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong and of the nature of his talks with them. This provided a great deal of useful material in preparing briefs and other documents for the Prime Minister's visit to China.⁴⁰⁰

Heath and Pompidou had developed good relations which yielded dividends both in Europe and with regards to the China policy. Acting together in this way only helped to further seal their bonds. During a meeting with the French President, Edward Heath expressed willingness to act in conformity with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs when meeting Mao in China, especially when it came to them signing a Communiqué at the end of his visit. Before Pompidou's visit to China the French and British leaders had discussed the prospect of each signing a Communiqué in their separate visits to China. Pompidou indicated that he was ready to have a Communiqué with China if Heath wanted one: equally it would be undesirable that one of them should have a Communiqué and not the other. The two leaders also remarked about how little Western leaders knew of Mao, that "No-one seemed to know where Chairman Mao might be ... it seemed impossible to know if Chairman Mao was alive".⁴⁰¹ Heath's Foreign Office colleague Michael Wilford later decided that if the Prime Minister's visit was due to take place before that of the French President, he would advise not to suggest a joint Communiqué to the Chinese or to react "enthusiastically" if they should propose one. He pointed out that it may be difficult to agree language with the Chinese which had real substance and was yet unlikely to give rise to undesirable speculation in third countries.⁴⁰² The Prime Minister, however, disagreed with this stance thinking that on an

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., Record of Conversation, Heath and Pompidou, 16 November 1973; also, Ibid., Letter, Evans to Addis, 16 November 1973.

⁴⁰¹ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Meeting Heath and Pompidou, 22 May 1973.

⁴⁰² Ibid., Letter, Wilford to Tomkins, undated; also Letter, Elliott to Bridges, 20 June 1973.

occasion such as his visit to China, “there might be much to be gained from a well-prepared joint Communiqué.”⁴⁰³

On 8 November Addis had a meeting with Wang Dong, Director of the Western and European Department at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during the course of which it was asked if the Prime Minister had decided whether or not he would wish to issue a joint Communiqué at the end of his visit. Addis reported that whatever Heath decided would be acceptable to the Chinese but that Wang had previously privately expressed the view that he hoped Britain would not insist on a Communiqué.⁴⁰⁴ For if there were no Communiqué there would be more time for talks.

In a brief by Thomas Brimelow, who had succeeded Denis Greenhill as Head of the Diplomatic Service, to John Hunt, the objectives of Edward Heath’s visit to China were laid out. The principal purpose was to “set the seal on the improvement in our bilateral relations set in motion by the agreement to exchange ambassadors in March 1972” and to establish a relationship where it would be “normal” for Heads of Government to communicate with one another on matters of common concern. It was important that the visit emphasised to the Chinese the importance which Britain attached to “as close a relationship with them as geography and differences of political system will allow” and to continue the exchange of views on international subjects of common concern begun in recent Ministerial exchanges. It was hoped that the visit would give further impetus to the Chinese interest in the European Community and Britain’s role in it – a note added to the briefing paper for the trip states that the Prime Minister’s visit should be seen from a “European angle”, complementing President Pompidou’s recent visit and taking the process of consultation between Europe and China a

⁴⁰³ Ibid., Letter, Armstrong to Elliott, 22 June 1973.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., Tel. no. 1268, Addis to Evans, 8 November 1973.

step further.⁴⁰⁵ This further illustrates the constant theme of European cooperation which consistently ran throughout his premiership.

Edward Heath expressed a desire for the trip to enable him to obtain a first-hand impression of modern China and her leaders. The Prime Minister also planned to make clear that Britain was interested in increasing the scope and value of trade with China, yet it was a fine line for the Foreign Office to tread as it did not want to be drawn into any general commitment to ignore obligations to her allies regarding the strategic embargo.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, under the Common Commercial Policy of the European Community Britain was unable to negotiate a commercial treaty or agreement with China, she was, however if she so desired, still free to negotiate a cooperation agreement. More Cultural exchanges were also hoped for on the British side as they felt that so far, the balance of advantage, particularly in student and academic exchanges had been heavily weighted in favour of the Chinese.

The briefing paper also warned of three Chinese objectives which would potentially prove problematic to the British line when raised with Heath. Advising that Heath should avoid any action that would call into question the status quo in Hong Kong; to make clear that Britain were not prepared to accept the Chinese proposal to establish an official representative in Hong Kong; and to avoid being drawn into any discussion of the long term future of the Colony. The Chinese proposal to achieve official Chinese representation in Hong Kong had already been rejected three times since 1972 by Britain. The Chinese insisted that acceptance of their proposal would seal the improved Sino-British relations and make it easier for them to do business with the Hong Kong Government. The Foreign Office feared that acceptance would severely damage business confidence and create an alternative focus of loyalty and so

⁴⁰⁵ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Briefing paper, Brimelow, 15 November 1973.

⁴⁰⁶ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 865, cols. 206-8, 27 November 1973.

wanted, if at all possible, to get the Chinese to drop their proposal. The Foreign Office also wanted Heath to avoid any statements which the Chinese might subsequently use, in public or in private, to typecast Britain as China's most reliable anti-Soviet ally in the West. Britain recognised that China's policy of improving relations with capitalist Governments was largely a function of her hostility towards the Soviet Union and while the improvement in Sino-British relations was of great value to Britain, it was important that she avoid giving the impression, to the Chinese or anyone else, that Britain supports China's anti-Soviet policies. It was stated that Heath should avoid confrontation with the Chinese over any of the other subjects which were currently giving trouble in the bilateral relations (notably the Air Services Agreement and Chinese immigration into Hong Kong).⁴⁰⁷ Finally, the Foreign Office wanted to learn more about the attitude of the Chinese Government on the issues of oil and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The total annual Chinese production of crude oil was fifty million tons. Of this amount, the Chinese had already offered to export one million tons to Japan in 1973. The Foreign Office predicted that the Chinese production of crude oil would become more significant in world terms within the next decade, particularly if Britain's offshore hopes, from a drawn out series of negotiations running concurrently through this period, were realised. What the Foreign Office wanted to discover was China's attitude to the oil crisis of the time and also whether they would continue to refuse joint exploration with British companies in the East China Sea.⁴⁰⁸

At that time, China was not a member of either the IMF or the IBRD, but if Taiwan were expelled from these bodies, the People's Republic had the potential to join both. If China did join these two financial institutions there would be important implications for the

⁴⁰⁷ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Briefing paper, Brimelow, 15 November 1973.

⁴⁰⁸ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Minute, Hunt, 20 November 1973.

international monetary system.⁴⁰⁹ Britain's strategy in this was to "wait and see", the Foreign Office were not going to take the initiative to resolve this problem but would support any procedural device which would allow multilateral discussions on the subject.⁴¹⁰

On 20 November, Downing Street issued a Press Notice announcing that the Prime Minister would pay an official visit to China, 4-12 January 1974, at the invitation of the People's Republic of China.⁴¹¹ Arrangements were in place for the mode and route of travel, sightseeing itinerary, interpreters, speeches and Heath's breakfast requirements.⁴¹² Only one matter remained outstanding, that of whether to seek a Sino-British Communiqué to be signed at the end of the visit. The Chinese were inclined to say that they should not seek to form an agreement as this would give more time for the general talks. But recalling the conversation with President Pompidou in which they both agreed that they should follow the same pattern, Heath wanted to inform the Elysée if the visit was to go ahead without a Communiqué.⁴¹³ Both the French and Chinese had described the drafting of their Communiqué as "taking up a disproportionate" amount of time and effort.⁴¹⁴ With an acknowledgement of this plan but with no further comment from France, Tom Bridges, Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister, suggested to Heath that the Foreign Office should then inform the Chinese that they agreed to follow their suggestion not to have a Communiqué.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ TNA, FCO 21/ 970 FEC 2/1, Tel. no. 179, Douglas-Home to Washington, 13 June 1972.

⁴¹¹ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Press Notice, Downing Street, 20 November 1973; see also, *The Times*, 21 November 1973.

⁴¹² TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Bridges to Grattan, 26 November 1973; Tel 1433, Addis to FCO, 15 December 1973.

⁴¹³ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Bridges to Grattan, 26 November 1973.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., Tel. No. 913, Home to Paris, 28 November, 1973.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., Tel no. 1669, Tomkins to Paris, 3 December 1973; Note, Bridges to Heath, 4 December 1973; Letter, Bridges to Grattan, 5 December 1973; Tel no., 1278, Home to Beijing, 6 December 1973.

On 29 November 1973 a telegram from Addis informed Wilford at the Foreign Office that Johnstone, leader of the Hawker Siddeley delegation which was then in Beijing, had notified the Ambassador, under the strictest confidence that terms had been agreed for the sale of fifteen Trident aircraft to China. The value of the contract was £48.75 million and the agreement was expected to be signed in the next few days. Johnstone had suggested to Addis that the announcement of this deal could be linked to the Prime Minister's visit to China.⁴¹⁶ The contract was later signed on 1 December and announced by the Press on 4 December.⁴¹⁷

On 13 December Patrick Grattan, Private Secretary to Douglas-Home, wrote to Bridges speculating that, due to both domestic and international pressures, Heath might have to shorten or postpone his visit to China. Grattan remarked that, in view of Sino-British relations with, it would be "far preferable for the Prime Minister to visit that country for a shorter period than for him to postpone his visit or cancel it altogether".⁴¹⁸ However Heath agreed with Bridges that a shortened visit would be "a rush, tiring, and open to much the same criticism as a longer visit".⁴¹⁹ The Press began to speculate that Heath may be forced into cancelling his visit to China the following month, Labour MP Denis Healey described Britain's domestic situation as "the gravest situation since the war" amidst a backdrop of an oil shortage, miners overtime ban, a rail go-slow, with the prospect of a three-day week looming.⁴²⁰ On 17 December, Addis delivered the message personally to Chinese Vice Minister Qiao Guanhua (as Zhou Enlai was too busy to receive him) that, "due to a number of very difficult internal and international problems" the Prime Minister would not be able to

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., Tel no., 1348, Addis to Wilford, 29 November 1973.

⁴¹⁷ *The Times*, 4 December, 1973; *The Financial Times*, 4 December 1973; *The Economist*, 8 December 1973.

⁴¹⁸ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Grattan to Bridges, 13 December 1973.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., Attached Note, Bridges, endorsed by Heath, 13 December 1973.

⁴²⁰ *The Daily Mirror*, 19 December 1973.

leave London in January. The note apologised for the inconvenience this would cause but asked permission to postpone the trip. Qiao immediately replied saying that he was confident that Zhou would “respect” the reason for Heath’s decision and that he himself hoped that it would be possible to rearrange the visit at an early date since he believed that “the meeting between the two heads of government and their discussions would be of great significance for the world”.⁴²¹ Edward Heath also invited the Chinese Ambassador to meet with him that day so that he could further explain the decision.⁴²² It was important that Britain retained a strong presence internationally while domestically, it was clear that the country was apparently crippled.⁴²³

Plans to rearrange the visit were put in motion quickly.⁴²⁴ Addis had acquired information on the Chinese Government’s programme for foreign visitors during 1974, “January and February were being kept free “because of the cold”; March and April were already full, and plans for May were unsettled; June was still free”.⁴²⁵ Heath would only be able to go during one of the periods of Parliamentary Recess and as British Ambassador John Addis was due to retire from the Diplomatic Service at the beginning of June, it was decided that the Whitsun Recess would be the best time for the Prime Minister to visit China.⁴²⁶

⁴²¹ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Tel no. 1440, Addis to Douglas-Home, 18 December 1973; Tel no. 1325, Douglas-Home to Addis, 18 December 1973; Tel no. 1443, Addis to Douglas-Home, 18 December 1973.

⁴²² TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Bridges to Grattan, 17 December 1973; Tel no. 1323 Home to Beijing, 17 December 1973; Tel no., 1324, Home to Beijing, 17 December 1973; Record of Conversation, 17 December 1973.

⁴²³ BDOHP, Interview with Percy Cradock.

⁴²⁴ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Grattan to Bridges, 3 January 1974.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter, Grattan to Bridges, 3 January 1974; Briefing paper, 4 January 1974, Letter, Bridges to Grattan, 7 January 1974; Letter Alexander to Bridges, 4 February 1974.

Pandas

Loans of giant pandas to American and Japanese Zoos formed an important part of the diplomacy of the People's Republic of China in the 1970s, as it marked some of the first cultural exchanges between the People's Republic and its new connections following the period of *détente*. This practice has been termed “Panda diplomacy”. Pandas were symbolic of China, and their status as an endangered species further served to highlight the significance which was attached to the Chinese government presenting these animals to political allies. At a reception for Asian Heads of Missions which Anthony Royle hosted in London in October 1973, during a conversation with China’s Ambassador to Britain, Song Zhiguang, Royle suggested that during his forthcoming visit to China the Prime Minister should invite the Chinese to present one, or preferably (for breeding possibilities) two pandas to him for the London Zoo. Song implied that the Chinese would be glad to provide them. Efforts had been made over the years to persuade the Chinese to release a panda for the zoo but without success.⁴²⁷ Recently though, they had been more forthcoming in granting America and the Japanese two pandas each. Anthony Acland, Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, noted that there would be great public interest in Britain if the Chinese could be persuaded to provide a panda to replace Chi-Chi.⁴²⁸ Lord Zuckerman, Secretary of the Zoological Society of London also attached great importance to this idea.⁴²⁹

On 31 October Royle reported back to Song that the Prime Minister would welcome a gift of giant pandas and that he was sure that such a gift would “contribute greatly to the goodwill

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter, Acland to Bridges, 23 October 1973.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, Chi-Chi had been at London Zoo for fourteen years –thus, Zuckerman argued that the Zoological Society of London had more experience in keeping this species than any other zoo. Letter, Zuckerman to Heath, 14 December 1973.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter, Bridges to Acland, 24 October 1973.

felt by people in this country for China".⁴³⁰ Giant pandas were extremely rare, even in China and the Chinese Government felt that they could only offer them as gifts if a Head of State or Government personally requested them. Song knew that President Nixon, President Pompidou, and Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Tanaka, had all personally requested them and his recommendation therefore was that the Prime Minister should himself mention the matter during his visit.⁴³¹ Patrick Grattan also noted that the London Zoo were planning on giving the Beijing Zoo two pairs of the rare Père David deer (a species of Chinese origin but then extinct in China) and that perhaps the presentation of the deer could be associated in some way with the visit of the Prime Minister, thus possibly gaining more favour on the likelihood of obtaining the Giant Pandas.⁴³² This was something that Heath was very much in favour of.⁴³³ Zuckerman also wrote to the Prime Minister pointing out that there had been a lot of talk of Giant Pandas over the previous few years but that the Zoological society had deliberately not asked the Chinese directly for any of these animals because they thought it may have complicated other, "perhaps more important" exchanges with the Chinese.⁴³⁴ However, he noted, "if a return gift seems to be the order of the day, we are ready to offer valuable animals ... to the Beijing Zoo and I have suggested a pair of White Rhinoceros".⁴³⁵ The Zoological Society of London had also invited a Chinese zoological delegation to visit zoos in Britain at their expense and so these two offers together could be considered a "fair exchange" for any Giant Pandas.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁰ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Grattan to Bridges, 14 November 1973.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid., Letter, Bridges to Grattan, 19 November 1973.

⁴³⁴ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Letter, Zuckerman to Heath, 14 December 1973.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

With the postponement of the visit to China, Tom Bridges wrote to Lord Zuckerman on the Prime Minister's behalf to explain that while Heath was "willing to help the Society if he were able to do so, while he was in China", he did not now think that there was anything more he could do, until further arrangements for a new visit had taken place.⁴³⁷

Looking forward to the future

As arrangements for the Pandas proceeded, problems arose over the Prime Minister's visit to China. However, this period of Sino-British relations had been extremely fruitful, the year ended with promising developments and good prospects. Heath's shift towards Europe had increased China's scope for developing Sino-British relations further but the policy makers remained realistic as, Richard Evans, Head of the Far East Department, astutely noted,

While the existence of good relations between this country and China undoubtedly helps us to protect or promote our own interests, we must not forget that we enjoy good relations with China because the Chinese decided that they wanted good relations with us or that the successors to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai might decide otherwise.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Ibid., Letter, Bridges to Zuckerman, 8 January 1974.

⁴³⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1226, Letter, Evans to Youde, 15 January 1974.

Chapter Five: The Wilson Government and China 1974-1976

A new phase in Britain's China policy began in early 1974. Domestic problems such as in industry, Britain's poor economic performance and the oil crisis that followed the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 provided the background for the first general election of 1974.⁴³⁹ The final catalyst for the snap election in February however, proved to be the announcement of an all-out strike by the miners.⁴⁴⁰ Although the Conservative Government had a possible eighteen months left in office Prime Minister Edward Heath and his Cabinet came to the conclusion that a general election on the issue of "Who governs Britain?" was unavoidable.⁴⁴¹ In the midst of huge domestic social upheaval, Heath admitted there were "difficult and unpleasant decisions" to be made and "it was right for the Government to have a new mandate for five years in which to carry these necessary policies to fruition".⁴⁴² The China policy, and indeed most major issues, took second place to election campaigning.

The Conservative Party's plea to the electors to "return a strong government with a firm mandate" was ignored as Britain was faced with its first hung parliament since 1929.⁴⁴³ Heath

⁴³⁹ D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

⁴⁴⁰ 'Mr Heath decides on general election for February 28', *The Times*, 8 February 1974, p. 1.

⁴⁴¹ 'Appeal to miners to defer strike', *The Times*, 8 February 1974, p.1; It is significant to note that another question being discussed was 'Is Britain ungovernable?', See Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974*, p.5.

⁴⁴² 'Cabinet unanimous in decision to call poll', *The Times*, 8 February 1974, p.2.

⁴⁴³ The election was held on Thursday 28 February 1974, with a 78% turnout (highest turnout since 1959, largely boosted by the three day week). Poll results: Labour Party 301 seats (37.1% vote); Conservative Party 296 seats (37.9% vote); Liberal Party 14 seats (19.3% vote). See also 'An election with a result but no government', *The Times*, 2 March 1974, p. 14.

entered negotiations with the Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe for a coalition Government.⁴⁴⁴ When an agreement could not be reached, Heath left Downing Street on the evening of 4 March to submit the government's resignation to the Queen, making way for a new Labour Administration. The leader of the Labour Party, Harold Wilson, was subsequently summoned to Buckingham Palace and returned as Prime Minister but if his minority Government was to survive a five year term the Labour Party's directive would have to be confirmed by a further general election.⁴⁴⁵ The new government approached China very differently to their predecessors and although the Foreign Office was set in its course in the China policy the degree to which changes of government affect this is always uncertain. In the context of Britain's policy towards the Soviet Union, the change in government in 1974 was significant, and in implementing this shift in priorities, the momentum in China policy was also altered.

There was widespread speculation in the press, on television and radio that the second election would come in the autumn months of 1974, thus providing Labour with an opportunity to prove their political agenda to the electorate, to turn election pledges into clear legislative and administrative form.⁴⁴⁶ Indeed Prime Minister Wilson announced on 18 September that the election would be held on 10 October.⁴⁴⁷ Labour won 319 seats (out of a

⁴⁴⁴ *The Times*, 2 March 1974; *The Times*, 4 March 1974; *The Times*, 4 March 1974, p. 2. See also E. Heath, *The Course of my Life*, p.516-520.

⁴⁴⁵ H. Wilson, *Final Term* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979) p.13-14.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Why Mr Wilson looks forward to October', *The Times*, 30 March 1974.

⁴⁴⁷ The Labour manifesto *Britain Will Win with Labour*, promised social change and also a referendum on entry to Europe. The Conservative Party's manifesto, *Putting Britain First*, set out the policy towards wage inflation but particularly focussed upon the importance of Europe. The Liberal Party's manifesto, *Why Britain Needs Liberal Government*, takes two issues: the economy and faith in government and promises to strengthen them both. This election was a great opportunity for the Liberals to build on their gains at the February election. See I. Dale, (ed.) *Labour Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997* (London, Routledge, 2000); Dale, *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997*, pp. 201-228; I. Dale, (ed.) *Liberal Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997* (London, Routledge, 2000) pp. 147-171.

total of 635) and the Conservatives fell behind on 277.⁴⁴⁸ A decisive victory had still not been achieved but Labour managed to hold on to power as a minority government until May 1979.⁴⁴⁹

A man of great political experience, James (Jim) Callaghan, was appointed Foreign Secretary (his third Great Office of State), having held this position in the Shadow Cabinet since April 1972.⁴⁵⁰ He was therefore already familiar with the details of the post and many of the personalities with whom he would deal. At a press conference in March 1975 Wilson proclaimed, "Jim and I are a complete partnership. We pass the ball to each other. Britain has a literate Prime Minister and a numerate Foreign Secretary."⁴⁵¹

Callaghan formed a strong relationship with his First Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Thomas Brimelow, and later with his successor Sir Michael Palliser. The bond between Callaghan and his Principal Private Secretary, Sir Anthony Acland, (who had previously served under Sir Alec Douglas-Home) was effective and the Foreign Secretary formed a reputation for making full use of the considerable talents within the Foreign Office ranks. His Foreign policy officials were wary of his temper but in general, Callaghan's personal relations within the Foreign Office were very good and he was highly regarded there.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁸ The election was held on Thursday 10 October 1974, with a 72.8% turnout. Poll results: Labour Party 319 seats (39.2% vote); Conservative Party 276 seats (35.8% vote); Liberal Party 13 seats (18.3% vote).

⁴⁴⁹ Led first by Wilson and then from May 1976 by James Callaghan.

⁴⁵⁰ H. Wilson, *Final Term*, p. 16-18, This was also true of most heads of department who Wilson appointed which had the advantage of providing a strong and knowledgeable base from which to immediately start work; He contrasts this with his last period of premiership (1964-1970) in which only two other members of his Cabinet had sat in a previous Cabinet.

⁴⁵¹ *The Times*, 13 March 1975, cited in K.O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford, 1997) p. 409.

⁴⁵² K.O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 410-411.

Callaghan admitted in his memoirs that he went to the Foreign Office with fixed objectives and set out the principles by which, in his opinion, a Labour Foreign Secretary must act,

He must recognise Britain's diminished international power and exert his influence in these areas and organisations where such principles can best be furthered, while being ready to take such other initiatives as he can construct. He must use foreign policy to bolster Britain's economic strength and in turn that will increase Britain's influence in international affairs. These considerations influenced a number of my early decisions and attitudes.⁴⁵³

Callaghan's greatest foreign policy priorities were the Atlantic Alliance, Anglo-Soviet relations and the Commonwealth. He felt that Edward Heath's commitment to Europe had weakened British relations with the United States, and as a strong believer in the Atlantic Alliance, Callaghan was determined that these must be strengthened.⁴⁵⁴ However, one of Callaghan's first major tasks, a fulfilment of a manifesto pledge, was to renegotiate the terms on which Britain had entered the European Economic Community (EEC). The Labour party itself was deeply divided on the issue, it had traditionally feared the consequences of EEC membership, such as the large differentials between the high price of food under the Common Agricultural Policy and the low prices prevalent in Commonwealth markets, as well as the loss of economic sovereignty and the freedom of governments to engage in socialist industrial policies, and party leaders stated their opinion that the Conservatives had negotiated unfavourable terms for Britain. Implementing a manifesto pledge, Wilson set a date for a referendum on the question, "Do you think the UK should stay in the European Community (Common Market)?" for 6 June 1975. Callaghan planned on visiting China but suggested that he would not be able to do until after the European negotiations and the

⁴⁵³ Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p.295-297.

⁴⁵⁴ Wilson and Callaghan visited President Nixon in Washington for talks as early as June 1974. Nixon resigned on 8 August 1974 and was replaced by his Vice-President Gerald Ford with whom Callaghan had an "excellent" relationship. See Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life*, p. 438.

following popular consultation and so set a preliminary date of October 1975 at the earliest.⁴⁵⁵

The main focus of the Prime Minister's international interests have been noted as being mainly confined to South Africa and Israel, on which matters he regularly asked Callaghan for information.⁴⁵⁶ Interestingly however, the February 1974 Labour Manifesto contained no mention of China whereas the October 1974 Labour Manifesto pledged to "continue to improve relations between Britain and China", perhaps after pressure from policy makers at the Foreign Office who recognised the importance of this bilateral relationship.⁴⁵⁷ In his memoirs, *Final Term*, Wilson states that "the period from October 1974 to the Parliamentary recess beginning in August 1975 was one of intense international activity", citing dealings with the EEC, U.S., Soviet Union, the Commonwealth Conference in Jamaica and the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) as the "major events". He goes on to assert that the time from November 1975 to April 1976 "was the most hectic I have ever known either as Prime Minister or as a member of Clement Attlee's post-war Cabinet...The flow of distinguished visitors to No. 10 showed no sign of abating", listing thirty-three dignitaries who travelled to Downing Street to meet him.⁴⁵⁸ At no time during these recollections on Foreign Office matters, nor indeed in the whole text of *Final Term*, does Wilson refer to the People's Republic of China – to its leadership, Britain's bilateral relations with, or trade between the two countries.

⁴⁵⁵ TNA, FCO 21/1241 FEC 3/548/14, Letter, Wilford to Brimelow, 30 October 1974.

⁴⁵⁶ Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life*, p. 409.

⁴⁵⁷ The Labour Party Manifesto: October 1974, *Britain Will Win with Labour*, see, Dale, (ed.) *Labour Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997*.

⁴⁵⁸ Wilson, *Final Term*, p. 152 and pp. 181-2.

Sino-British relations “remained good” in 1974

Britain's relations with China, on the whole, remained good during 1974 but Edward Youde, who replaced John Addis as Britain's Ambassador to China during this year, noted that, for the Chinese, the relationship contained “a few question marks” which did not exist before. The uncertainty over Britain's future membership of the EEC was not welcome news to the Chinese as this was the association of power which gave the burgeoning Sino-British relationship its impetus. As Addis described,

The Chinese betted heavily in 1973 on European unity and independence and on a leading British role and probably feel disappointed at the failure of Western Europe and of ourselves in particular to match their expectations.⁴⁵⁹

And later confirmed this to Addis by saying that he

Hoped that Britain's problems with her Community partners could be solved through negotiations. In present circumstances dissent within the Community was not favourable to Europe as a whole.⁴⁶⁰

Britain's preoccupation with domestic and European issues meant that there was only one, albeit successful, Ministerial visit by Lord Beswick, Minister of State for the Department of Industry, who led a postal and telecommunications delegation. According to Youde, the Chinese reiterated many times over the year that “relations are good” and that they were interested in maintaining the bilateral partnership.

Although no longer Prime Minister, Edward Heath's visit to China went ahead, an indication both of the positive Chinese verdict on him and his commitment to the bilateral relationship. Now Leader of the Opposition, Heath flew to China in May for a nine day visit, 24 May - 2 June, and was received by Chairman Mao. In every city he visited, thousands of school children danced their welcome and tens of thousands were mobilised along the streets to

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/548/7, Letter, Addis to Youde, 27 March 1974.

⁴⁶⁰ TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/548/7, Tel no. 467, Addis to FCO, 14 June 1974.

demonstrate the intensity of China's welcome.⁴⁶¹ He was effectively treated as a senior world statesman.⁴⁶² The Chinese used Heath's visit to emphasise their interest in European unity as a counter-weight to the Soviet Union.⁴⁶³ It was Mao's public demonstration that he preferred the pro-EEC, anti-Soviet posture of the Conservative leader to the anti-EEC, relatively pro-Soviet attitudes of his successor, Harold Wilson.⁴⁶⁴ In his private conversations with Heath, Mao made it clear that he hoped the Tory leader would again lead Britain, and perhaps the Community, into an anti-Soviet position which would serve China's interest equally with that of Britain.⁴⁶⁵ Ambassador Youde passed his opinion on the visit in the 'Annual Review' for the year. He saw the renewal of a Chinese invitation to visit the People's Republic of China was

... no doubt because it was during his term of office that we severed our last official contact with Taiwan and relations were raised in consequence to ambassadorial level; and Britain joined the EEC. These developments were welcome to them and in consequence they felt an obligation to fulfil the commitment they had undertaken in inviting him when he was Prime Minister.⁴⁶⁶

However, Addis surmised that "the visit was an undoubted success and has contributed to the continuing development of Sino-British relations".⁴⁶⁷

The Gift of Pandas

At his final meeting during his visit to China with Qiao Guanhua, Edward Heath repeated a request for a gift of Giant Pandas from the Chinese for the London Zoo. He explained that his tour had been a great success and the only thing required to cement the friendship between the Chinese and British people was the gift of two pandas. Chairman Mao and the Chinese

⁴⁶¹ E. Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 629.

⁴⁶² Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography*, p. 691.

⁴⁶³ TNA, FCO 21/1240 FEC 3/548/10, 'Visit of Mr Heath to China', Addis, 14 June 1974.

⁴⁶⁴ Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 631-633; *The Times*, 25 February 1975; T. Benn, *Against the Tide* (London: Arrow Books, 1990) pp. 198-199 and p. 338.

⁴⁶⁵ H. van Thal (ed.) *The Prime Ministers*, vol. 2 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975) p. 412.

⁴⁶⁶ TNA, FCO 21/1376 FEC 1/4, Youde, China: Annual Review for 1974, 6 January 1975.

⁴⁶⁷ TNA, FCO 21/1240 FEC 3/548/10, 'Visit of Mr Heath to China', Addis, 14 June 1974.

Government declared that they would be delighted to make such a presentation from China to Britain as a symbol of the new relationship.

The Pandas were regarded as a gift from the Chinese Government to the British Government. In Britain, the Zoological Society of Great Britain would be the recipients on behalf of the Government and the Pandas would be housed by the national Zoo in London.⁴⁶⁸ Staff from London Zoo were sent out to Beijing so that they could be comprehensively trained in the habits and care of pandas. After this, the pandas were sent to London and the Chinese staff would accompany the British staff and remain in London until the pandas were fully settled. On 13 September, two giant pandas, Chia Chia and Ching Ching, left Beijing and travelled safely to London Zoo. In addition, to the Père David deer sent the previous year, two British bred Rhinos, Mungo and Nykasi, took up residence in Beijing zoo on 18 December, a gift from the British people to the Chinese. Ambassador Youde fully appreciated the symbolism of this gesture from China. Beijing used Pandas as a form of diplomacy and Youde reported that this exchange of animals indicated a state of “good relations” and reason to expect a continuation in the tempo of political exchanges.

The handing over ceremony for the Pandas was on 23 October 1974. The Chinese Ambassador, Song, presented the Pandas followed by an address of acceptance by Prince Philip, President of the Zoological Society of London, on behalf of both the British people and the Society, in particular.⁴⁶⁹

Although the Giant Pandas had been desired and, equally, welcomed by London Zoo, Lord Zuckerman met Harold Wilson in November where he spoke about the Pandas and their

⁴⁶⁸ TNA, PREM 16/452, Letter, Dales to Bridges, 7 May 1974.

⁴⁶⁹ TNA, FCO 21/1246 FEC 7/5, Letter, Rawlins to Martin, 1 October 1974.

upkeep, "being the agent for demonstrations of friendship between the British and Chinese Governments was proving to be a pretty expensive business".⁴⁷⁰ Not only did the Zoo have to maintain a suitable diet for the Pandas (consisting to a large extent of imported bamboo shoots) but they also needed to provide suitable accommodation for the animals which would cost £70,000 to build. Zuckerman urged the Prime Minister to provide money for their upkeep, with Foreign Office Minister Goronwy-Roberts suggesting a public appeal with a contribution made by the Government. He feared that a failure to provide the money for the Zoo could be seen as a deliberate snub to Beijing, "Through no fault of our own, we are incurring suspicion in China, particularly over our relations with the Soviet Union, and are not so far able to fulfil our manifesto commitment to improve relations with China ... It seems silly to exacerbate the problem in this way".⁴⁷¹ The Zoo suggested launching a public appeal, with the Government making a generous contribution. Realising that the launch of a public appeal to feed the pandas could antagonise the Chinese, the problem was sent to the Department of the Environment, which was encouraged to find extra funds to feed the animals.⁴⁷² The Foreign Office later characterised the Zoo's demands for funding as ingratitude, "In the first two weeks after pandas' arrival attendance at the Zoo was up 60% on last year; pre pandas it was down 30%... All in all, we think the zoo has done very well".⁴⁷³

Edward Youde

On 21 August Edward Youde arrived in Beijing to take up his post as Britain's Ambassador to China, as John Addis retired from the position. Youde was fluent in Mandarin and spent ten of his thirty year diplomatic career in China.⁴⁷⁴ Youde had served on *HMS Amethyst* in

⁴⁷⁰ TNA, PREM 16/452, Letter, Armstrong to Acland, 13 November 1974.

⁴⁷¹ TNA, PREM 16/452, Letter, Goronwy-Roberts to Callaghan, 14 November 1974.

⁴⁷² TNA, PREM 16/452, Letter, Goronwy-Roberts to Zuckerman, 27 January 1975.

⁴⁷³ TNA, FCO 21/1246 FEC 7/5, Letter, Ehrman to Martin, 20 November 1974.

⁴⁷⁴ Cradock, *Experiences of China*, p. 21.

1949 when it had come under attack by People's Liberation Army forces. As the frigate was damaged by the shelling and subsequently became stranded in the Yangtze River it was Youde who, using his skills in Mandarin, attempted to secure the release of the *Amethyst* through negotiations with the People's Liberation Army commander. Following the *Amethyst's* escape from enemy territory, Youde was awarded the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his actions. As a reflection of Callaghan's core foreign policy aims, Youde had a very close relationship with George H.W. Bush, Head of the United States Liaison Office in Beijing 1974-75. He became a mentor to Bush and one of his closest confidantes.⁴⁷⁵ The willingness to confide in Youde spoke volumes about the re-energised nature of Anglo-American relations which were again growing steadily under the Labour Government compared to the "nadir" of the Special Relationship under Edward Heath.⁴⁷⁶

Cultural Relations

The programme of cultural exchanges started under the previous administration experienced a temporary hitch during the summer of 1974. Zui Yanming, a Chinese student, who had arrived in Britain in October 1973 to attend a year long course in English at the foreign language department at Ealing Technical College, sparked a police search after disappearing from his lodgings in Ealing on 7 May. A few weeks later the Home Office confirmed that the student had wanted to defect and had been granted political asylum to stay in the country, "This Chinese man's application to have the conditions of his entry to this country varied have been considered and it has been decided to allow him to take up employment".⁴⁷⁷ The Chinese reaction to this was that the British government had "not acted intelligently ... these

⁴⁷⁵ Engel (ed.), *The China Diary of George H.W. Bush: The Making of a Global President*, p. xxxi and pp. 16-17 (n. 33) and pp. 134-5 (n. 84).

⁴⁷⁶ Dickie, 'Special' No More – *Anglo-American Relations Since 1945: Rhetoric and Reality*, pp. 133-71, and Bartlett, 'The Special Relationship': *A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, pp. 107-47.

⁴⁷⁷ *The Times*, 3 July 1974.

actions have done our relations no good".⁴⁷⁸ Planned visits to Britain by two Chinese scientific delegations were cancelled in retaliation, as were the Sino-British student exchanges which had been planned for the summer months of 1974.⁴⁷⁹

Despite this lull in activity, Foreign Secretary Callaghan officially opened the Great Britain-China Centre in London on 16 July, a ceremony which was attended by the Chinese Ambassador to Britain, Song Zhiguang. Indeed, on 18 October, nine British Council students arrived in Beijing to study Chinese and a new programme of cultural and student exchanges were discussed, it was therefore decided that in order to convey to the Chinese that the British Government valued close cooperation with them, London should accept the proposal for Lord Beswick to lead a telecommunications delegation to China and also express pleasure at the further Chinese discussions with Rolls Royce about the Spey engine deal.⁴⁸⁰

Visit to China of the British Postal and Telecommunications Delegation

Relations also developed during the visit to China of the British Postal and Telecommunications Delegation, led by Lord Beswick, Minister of State at the Department of Industry visited China from 16 until 28 September 1974. The visit was in return for one paid to Britain in 1971 by Zhong Fuxiang, then Director of the Chinese Telecommunications Administration. Due to the impending General Election at the time of the visit, Lord Beswick was only able to stay from 17 to 21 September, for the remainder of the visit, the delegation was headed by M Lam, Under-Secretary in the Department of Industry. The Party visited sights in and around Beijing, meeting Zhong and the Vice Minister for the Chinese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Shen Guang to discuss subjects relating to postal and

⁴⁷⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/548/7, Letter, Youde to Evans, 28 June 1974.

⁴⁷⁹ TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/548/7, Letter, Evans to Galsworthy, 18 July 1974.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

telecommunications services between China and Britain leading to plans to establish a direct telex link between the two countries. However, the visit had a wider significance than just these talks. It was the first visit at Ministerial level by a member of the new Labour government and British Ambassador Edward Youde claimed that, "its success was important to the continuation of good relations" with China.⁴⁸¹ The successful conclusion of the visit by this delegation contributed "substantially to the maintenance of the present good political climate".⁴⁸²

The Air Services Agreement 1974

An important practical step forward in relations would be the conclusion of the Air Services Agreement, initialled in 1973 to provide a trunk route between Beijing and London. Thus far it remained unsigned because additional clauses had been added to the Agreement by the Chinese authorities which had not previously been discussed.⁴⁸³ Ma Renhui, Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority of China (CAAC), had told Michael Heseltine, then the British Minister for Aerospace, in March 1973 that there were no political problems in the way of an Air Services Agreement between Britain and China. During the negotiations, which took place in Beijing in June 1973, agreement was reached for a British route linking London with Beijing via Hong Kong (although without pick-up rights in Hong Kong). By the end of 1974 new demands had been raised which altered the basis of the agreement. Concurrently with the formal signature of the Air Services Agreement the Chinese now required the British Government to make a formal public statement regarding the existing air traffic between Hong Kong and Taiwan. This included two main points: firstly that the Sino-British Agreement would be an Agreement between States, in contrast to the already-

⁴⁸¹ TNA, FCO 21/1247 FEC 8/2, Despatch, Youde to Callaghan, 6 October 1974.

⁴⁸² TNA, FCO 21/1247 FEC 8/2, Despatch, Youde to Callaghan, 6 October 1974.

⁴⁸³ TNA, FCO 21/1251 FEC 21/3, Letter, Youde to Male, 6 November 1974.

established Taiwan-Hong Kong flights which should be classed as non-Governmental regional air traffic, and secondly that the UK Government did not recognise the insignia on the Taiwanese airline China Airlines (CAL) aircraft as national insignia; nor did it recognise China Airlines as an airline representing a State.⁴⁸⁴ Similar conditions had been imposed on the Sino-Japanese Air Service negotiations and had eventually been accepted by Tokyo. These conditions set by the Chinese on their signature of the Air Services Agreement were likely to apply as long as any British airline (it was at that time Cathay Pacific Airways (CPA) which ran the Hong Kong-Taiwan route) continued to operate to Taiwan or China Airlines aeroplanes were permitted to land on territory administered by Britain.

The motivation for the Chinese to impose these stipulations was purely political; they sought to isolate Taiwan. The reasons for Britain not accepting the Chinese proposals were economic. The balance of financial advantage between the existing earnings of Cathay Pacific on their routes to, from and via Taiwan and the potential earnings from an extension of one or two weekly London-Hong Kong-Beijing services was heavily weighted to the former. Estimates for the 1974 CPA revenue were US\$38 million. The best estimate of the profitability of a British Airways (BA) service to China via Hong Kong was that it would initially break even (therefore no profit) and if the service were to operate to Beijing without routing via Hong Kong the official deficit was estimated at £1.9 million per annum. Thus, in 1974, in economic terms, there was no case for putting the operational CPA-Taiwan services at risk in order to obtain permission for British Airways to operate into Beijing.⁴⁸⁵

Ambassador Youde, from his perspective of Sino-British relations in Beijing, took an optimistic tone in his 'Year Review' of Sino-British relations for 1974, even though the

⁴⁸⁴ TNA, FCO 21/1251 FEC 21/3, Draft Memorandum, 17 January 1975.

⁴⁸⁵ TNA, FCO 21/1251 FEC 21/3, Letter, Bentley to Donald, 30 December 1974.

atmosphere in the Foreign Office began to take on a different feel. Assistant Under-Secretary Michael Wilford wrote in November that,

... We must tread wearily where the Chinese are concerned. Relations remain good, but we are already beginning to coast gently but perceptibly downhill. We have been considering ways of getting the motor re-started ... but I think nothing will have any great effect until we are out of European renegotiation and, I trust, still inside the Community. Thereafter the only action likely to restore the position and to effect a real improvement in our relations is a high level Ministerial visit to China.⁴⁸⁶

The transition from a Conservative to Labour Government in Britain certainly coincided with a shift in Sino-British relations with markedly less diplomatic exchanges and more fraught trade bargaining. Indeed the Chinese held suspicions that the Labour Government was less interested in good Sino-British relations than their predecessors.⁴⁸⁷ The change in government inevitably had some impact on the Sino-British relationship but initially, the broad lines continued to be carried forward, executed by a Foreign Office where attitudes and personnel were more constant however, it increasingly became obvious through the year that this change in British government had altered the dynamic of the bilateral relationship, as the Chinese were suspicious that the new Labour government were less interested than its predecessors in the maintenance of good relations with China.⁴⁸⁸ Deputy Under-Secretary, Michael Wilford, expressed his concern at “the relative falling off in HMG’s [Her Majesty’s Government’s] relationship with the Chinese government”.⁴⁸⁹ He cautioned that this situation did not stem from any weakness in the Far Eastern Departments’ commission but rather from the fact that

the Government’s priorities since their first election in February have been elsewhere than in Asia ... the view which the Chinese Government take of HMG’s performance since February 1974 has been coloured by HMG’s preoccupation with the renegotiation on EEC and the Chinese fear that this is weakening Europe’s willingness to stand up to the Russians.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁶ TNA, FCO 21/1241 FEC 3/548/14, Letter, Wilford to Brimelow, 30 October 1974.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., Tel no. 709, Wilford to Youde, 26 November 1974.

⁴⁸⁸ TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/548/7, Letter, March to Youde, 27 November 1974.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., Letter, Wilford to Galsworthy, 29 October 1974.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

It was further noted that the likelihood of an announcement in the near future that the Prime Minister would be going to Moscow would also do little to improve the Chinese view of the British Government. Unfortunately, this was a situation that could not be alleviated, there was no possibility of Wilson or Callaghan being able to spare the time to go to China. Wilford further surmised that China looked increasingly to West Germany rather than to Britain to be its “champion in Europe”.⁴⁹¹ Britain was economically weak, wavered in its attitude to the EEC and was suspected of seeking closer relations with “the northern bear”.⁴⁹² Thus despite the Government’s intention as expressed in the October manifesto to further improve relations with China, this seemed increasingly out of reach; even if Britain made a public declaration, “to show nations of that part of the world that we have not forgotten them entirely ... it would be foolish to imagine that such a bow in their direction ... was going to erase the image which the Chinese have of us at present”.⁴⁹³

Britain’s Ambassador in Beijing agreed with Wilford’s point of view and advised,

I think it would be a good idea to start once again to build up a pattern of less prestigious ministerial visits between China and the United Kingdom. The best way to start would be a further visit on the style of Lord Beswick’s visit here [to China]. in other words, we should aim at rather more technical Ministerial visits which would build up the relationship between the Labour Government and the Chinese Government in an undramatic way and thus provide a foundation for the Secretary of State’s visit in due course.⁴⁹⁴

Prime Minister Wilson had no plans to go to China and as Callaghan had been invited to visit while Shadow Foreign Secretary but had had to forego the invitation after the February election result he decided that he would undertake a “major trip” though he would not be able to visit until early 1976.⁴⁹⁵ Looking forward to the next year however, the Foreign Office

⁴⁹¹ TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/548/7, Letter, Wilford to Galsworthy, 29 October 1974.

⁴⁹² Ibid., Letter, Ehrman to Martin, 22 October 1974.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., Letter, Wilford to Galsworthy, 29 October 1974.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., Letter, Youde to Wilford, 28 October 1974.

⁴⁹⁵ *Hansard*, H.C. Deb., vol. 882, cols. 431-3W, 3 December 1974; TNA, FCO 21/1241 FEC 3/548/14, Tel. no. 709, Wilford to Youde, 26 November 1974; Tel. no. 924, Youde to Wilford, 28 November 1974. See also TNA, FCO 21/1241 FEC 3/548/14, Letter, March to

maintained a hopeful outlook, "Barring unforeseen accidents, the outlook for 1975 is a continuation of our present relationship".⁴⁹⁶

"Ensuring the stability of Anglo-Chinese relations" in 1975⁴⁹⁷

William Bentley of the Far Eastern Department surmised that by the end of 1975 "our relations with China seem more soundly based than a year ago". Eric Deakins, Christopher Soames and Edward Heath visited China during 1975 and Callaghan's visit was fixed for May 1976. Britain was, however, less successful in persuading Chinese Ministers to travel in the opposite direction, a situation described by William Bentley in the Foreign Office as an "irritating feature of the Chinese system".⁴⁹⁸ Although it was accepted that the advanced age of China's high level leaders, Mao and Zhou, prevented them from travelling, invitations to the Ministers and Vice-Ministers of Foreign Trade and to the Minister for Public Health were politely received but no dates were fixed.⁴⁹⁹

Britain's Ambassador in Beijing, Edward Youde, reported that the year 1975 marked a "crucial time of transition for China" as it began with the formal installation of the new Chinese Government.⁵⁰⁰ The National People's Congress (NPC) of the People's Republic of China is the highest organ of State power and in January the First Session of the Fourth NPC was convened. For seven years, since the Cultural Revolution, China had had no more than a skeleton Administration. The new structure established by the NPC in January demonstrated

Male, 9 December 1974, March suggested that the announcement of a China visit would strengthen Britain's hand in the forthcoming visits to the Soviet Union by Wilson and Callaghan.

⁴⁹⁶ TNA, FCO 21/1376 FEC 1/4, Letter, Martin to March, 24 January 1975.

⁴⁹⁷ TNA, FCO 21/1496, FEC 014/2, Letter, Paul to Martin, 2 February 1976.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., Letter, Bentley to Youde, 5 February 1976

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., China: Annual Review for 1975, Youde, 14 January 1976.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

a substantial degree of consensus among the leadership on the future composition of the regime and on the objectives it should pursue.⁵⁰¹ Zhou Enlai delivered a report on the 'Work of the Government', reaffirming the Chinese goal of modernisation, China planned to have a "relatively comprehensive industrial and economic system" by 1980. Chairman Mao still held the power in decision making, Youde reported that "there continued to be ample evidence that on great issues of policy what he says still goes, or at least that no major policy could be launched without some sign that it carries his personal imprinteur" and also perhaps to reassure the Foreign Office added that his "brain ... [was] still lucid" (having met him during Heath's visit to China the previous year).⁵⁰² However Mao was aged 82 and how long he would live and how the Chinese Administration would deal with his death was one of the largest questions hanging over China at that time.

Visit to China of Eric Deakins

The visit to Beijing by Eric Deakins, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Trade, was carefully planned as it was the first visit to China by a Trade Minister under the Labour Government. This was an opportunity to emphasise the great importance that Britain still attached to its trading connections with China and to its further development. Although the visit was taking place during the parliamentary sitting and Deakins would be travelling from China on to visit South America, it was important that the visit was not too short at risk of offending the Chinese and the dates were decided as 19-28 March.⁵⁰³ This allowed him four and a half days in Beijing and three days in Shanghai where the delegation would attend the opening of the British Exhibition of Scientific Instruments and Machine Tools (25 March

⁵⁰¹ TNA, FCO 21/1496, FEC 014/2, China: Annual Review for 1975, Youde, 14 January 1976.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ TNA, FCO 21/1383 FEC 3/548/2, Tel no. 33, Youde to FCO, 13 January 1975; TNA, FCO 21/1383 FEC 3/548/2, Letter, Moore to Taylor, 25 February 1975.

- 4 April). In addition to attending the Shanghai exhibition, the main aim of the visit was to “ensure [the] Chinese Government of the continuing interest of HMG [Her Majesty’s Government] in expanding trade with China, which is unaffected by the change of Government here”.⁵⁰⁴ This would include discussing current Sino-British trade problems, discussing prospects for British exports to China (key sectors included oil equipment, mining equipment, aviation, petrochemical and mechanical handling), exploring the state of the Chinese economy and the extent to which they would be in the market in the next few years for major imports and finally, extending a formal invitation to Yao Yilin, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Trade, to visit Britain, that he may be “shown first hand the achievements of British Industry and so that we may further discuss together how our trade may be developed further”.⁵⁰⁵

The Air Services Agreement 1975

A major outstanding issue of China policy under the Wilson administration was the unsigned Air Services Agreement. The British position at the beginning of 1975 was that no concessions would be made to China in the agreement regarding Taiwan, but with Eric Deakins visiting China it was suggested by George Rogers at the Department of Trade that this might be a good opportunity to lift the matter to Ministerial level in the hope of resolving the situation.⁵⁰⁶ The Department of Trade recommended that Deakins should press the Chinese to sign the Agreement as initialled in June 1973 on the grounds that both sides had negotiated in full knowledge of the facts and no fresh circumstances had arisen to warrant a change.⁵⁰⁷ Youde disagreed with this plan explaining that the political problems involved in

⁵⁰⁴ TNA, FCO 21/1383 FEC 3/548/2, Minute, Darlington, 16 January 1975.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., Letter of Invitation, Drafted 24 February 1975; Ibid., Tel no. 15, FCO to Beijing, 17 January 1975.

⁵⁰⁶ TNA, FCO 21/1405 FEC 21/7, Letter, Rogers to Male, 10 March 1975.

⁵⁰⁷ TNA, FCO 21/1405 FEC 21/7, Tel no. 188, Callaghan to Youde, 18 March 1975.

the Air Services Agreement were the responsibility of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and thus Deakins' host, the Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade was unlikely to be ready to discuss the issues involved. The ambassador concluded that to raise the Air Services Agreement during this visit would "inject a strongly controversial element into a visit which is designed as a trade promotion exercise".⁵⁰⁸ The Foreign Office believed that the Chinese were unlikely to sign the Agreement unless Britain met their concessions whereas the Department of Trade believed that "there is at least a chance that the Chinese may quietly drop their demands and that no harm was done by trying".⁵⁰⁹ Rogers noted that if Deakins were to go to Beijing and make no mention of the wish to implement the direct air link between London and Beijing, "his silence would be bound to be misinterpreted".⁵¹⁰ A compromise was reached between the two departments. It was agreed that, when speaking with Chai Shufan, and other Chinese Ministers, Deakins should "mention how inconvenient it is both for the Chinese and ourselves not to have a direct air service linking our two capitals". If the Chinese then raised the question of Taiwanese air services to Hong Kong then Deakins should reply that "the Agreement is restricted to an exchange of rights for trunk routes to be operated by British Airways and CAAC between London and Beijing. No services through Taiwan are involved ... no reason has been put forward why Taiwan should now become an obstacle".⁵¹¹ In the event, Deakins did indeed raise the issue of the Air Service Agreement informally, at a social occasion during his visit but Chai, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Trade, was "disinclined" to take up the subject in detail but said that he hoped a "satisfactory solution" could be found in due course.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, Tel no. 240, Youde to Callaghan, 11 March 1975.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., Letter, Rogers to Roberts, 11 March 1975.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., Brief by the Department of Trade, undated; Letter, Male to Rogers, 13 March 1975.

⁵¹² TNA, FCO 21/1405 FEC 21/7, Tel no. 280, Youde to FCO, 24 March 1975.

By June, two years after the agreement had been negotiated and initialled, the two sides were no closer to signing. The Ministers in the Department of Trade led by George Rogers, agreed that there should be no change in the British stance, that is, nothing should be done to prejudice the Cathay Pacific services to and through Taiwan. They pointed to two political factors which could induce the Chinese to be more flexible. Firstly, the recent referendum result had returned a 67% "Yes" vote to continue membership of the European Economic Community and the Chinese had been open about their support for Britain remaining in the EEC.⁵¹³ Secondly, the Foreign Secretary planned to visit Beijing in April 1976 and would certainly be discussing it with his Chinese counterparts if the question had not been settled by then.⁵¹⁴ However, a breakthrough in negotiations came when, on 9 July, it was announced that the Japanese had successfully negotiated with Taiwan a re-opening of the Air Services between Tokyo and Taipei which had been closed since 20 April 1974 when Japan had concluded a Governmental Civil Air Transport Agreement in Beijing with similar conditions to those China had imposed on Britain.⁵¹⁵ This opened a new avenue of thought for the Foreign Office, Youde suggested that he approach the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a formula which announced that

The Government of the United Kingdom do not recognise CAL as a State airline nor the insignia, emblem or flag that it uses as the insignia or flag of a State. Any aviation link between the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom would be Governmental and Inter-State whereas the existing link between Hong Kong and Taiwan is non-Governmental and Regional.⁵¹⁶

Despite this change in vocabulary intended to placate the Chinese side, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to hold out on the negotiations, correspondence petered out and by the end of the year the matter had still not been formalised.

⁵¹³ *The Times*, 7 June 1975.

⁵¹⁴ TNA, FCO 21/1405 FEC 21/7, Notes of a Meeting, 18 June 1975.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 761, Westlake to FCO, 8 July 1975.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 592, Youde to FCO, 1 August 1975.

Nevertheless there was a major trade deal of 1975, that of Rolls Royce and the sale of Spey jet engines and the licence to manufacture Spey engines in China for their air force. The deal highlighted two issues. Firstly, Callaghan led the Foreign Office in deciding that the economic benefits to the company that could result from the deal outweighed strategic and political considerations and made it worth pursuing.⁵¹⁷ Secondly it signalled a reappraisal of traditional CoCom (Co-ordinating Committee on the International Strategic Embargo) attitudes, which would open new doors for Britain in China. The export of goods to China was controlled by the Co-ordinating Committee on the International Strategic Embargo (CoCom) which covered military and atomic energy sectors as well as other sensitive industrial items.⁵¹⁸

All exports of aircraft (civil and military) in 1975 required an export licence which enabled the British Government to exercise direct control over those exports by means of the export licensing procedure.⁵¹⁹ Therefore the Foreign Office was kept updated at each stage of the negotiations between Rolls Royce and the China National Technical Import Corporation. Foreign Secretary Jim Callaghan was noticeably involved in overseeing the diplomatic aspect of the deal. For example, when newspapers began speculating that the Spey deal had been effectively “banned” by Harold Wilson due to secret negotiations on a trade deal he had signed in Russia.⁵²⁰ Moves were quickly made by Callaghan to assure the Chinese that no such assurances had been made and that the speculation had arisen from a comment by a member of the Society of British Aerospace Companies on 14 February in which he had

⁵¹⁷ TNA, FCO 21/1394 FEC 21/1, Background note, Alexander, undated.

⁵¹⁸ Britain had secured CoCom approval for the export of Hawker Siddeley Aviation Tridentes to China in 1973.

⁵¹⁹ TNA, FCO 21/1394 FEC 21/1, Letter, McIntosh to Jackson, 13 February 1975.

⁵²⁰ *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 February 1975; *The Daily Express*, 24 February 1975.

reiterated that “the present restrictions on military sales to China remained firm” (referring to CoCom as opposed to any secret deal).⁵²¹

The Chinese wanted to delete a clause insisting on the prohibition on the sale of engines to third countries. This was thought by the Foreign Office to be mainly due to “national pride” and “an objection to any interference in what they consider, however misguidedly, will be their affairs”.⁵²² However, this was the “single most important issue” of the agreement on which the Foreign Office urged Rolls Royce to stand firm.⁵²³ From the British point of view, this was an important clause in presenting the case to CoCom but also from a commercial point of view, if Rolls Royce were to help the Chinese develop the engine and there was no ban on transfer, they would, in effect be licensing the Chinese to compete with them in the overseas market.⁵²⁴ Although the proposed test facility in China infringed the CoCom criteria, (the automatic data recording equipment and the digital computer were embargoed) the Ministry of Defence deemed it not to constitute an immediate or long-term threat in its present form.⁵²⁵ The proposed deal had attracted an objection in CoCom from the United States, with France, Germany and Japan reserving their positions. In respect to China, CoCom restrictions continued to apply and a case had to be made to CoCom before any sale would be approved. Civilian equipment stood a fair chance of obtaining approval but equipment intended for military use was unlikely to be approved. In order to make a further approach to the Americans to reconsider their attitude to the deal, Henry Kissinger was made aware that negotiations on the Spey engines were continuing. The Foreign Office began

⁵²¹ FCO 21/1394 FEC 21/1, Tel no. 141, Callaghan to Youde, 24 February 1975; *Ibid.*, Document no. 53, note from East European and Soviet Department, 27 February 1975; *Hansard*, vol. 887, cols.239W, Deakins, 28 February 1975; TNA, FCO 21/1394 FEC 21/1, Letter, Kerr to Maitland, 6 March 1975.

⁵²² TNA, FCO 21/1394 FEC 21/1, Tel no. 211, Youde to Bentley, 13 February 1975.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, Letter, Marshall to Warrington, 6 March 1975.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, Tel no. 211, Youde to Bentley, 13 February 1975.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter, Abbotts to Sentry, 11 October 1975.

working in conjunction with the Treasury to secure an amendment of the CoCom rules so as to make the sale of the military Spey and its technology compatible with the rules.⁵²⁶ During the Nixon era of administration when Britain had developed her ties with China, the Americans had an easier attitude to CoCom. Under President Ford, their stance grew much tougher with regards to the framework of CoCom and it was during this period in which Britain was trading. When the Spey deal began, confidential assurances had been received from Henry Kissinger and President Nixon that Britain would not face direct United States retaliatory measures even though, formally, the Americans opposed the deal in CoCom. Whether these assurances were still effective under the Ford Administration was open to question.⁵²⁷ The continuing anti-American stance to the deal could be to the possible detriment of the project.

The Chinese however, attached great political importance to the deal. British Ministers had gone out of their way to assure them of the government backing of the deal. Sino-British relations had been slowed down by recent events and the Chinese would interpret a reversal of the Spey policy very unfavourably. The long term significance of the deal was that Chinese aviation would be tied to Britain for at least a decade and paved the way for future aerospace commercial deals, such as the sale of Concorde to China. In December Sir Kenneth Keith, Chairman of Rolls Royce, travelled to Beijing and the deal was signed on 13 December.⁵²⁸ The deal was a great success for Rolls Royce and for the country as a whole.

As 1975 ended Ambassador Youde reflected that, on the whole, the year had gone well for Britain's relationship with China. Britain's responsibility in the next year of the bilateral

⁵²⁶ TNA, T362/51, Letter, Benn to Hattersley, 23 August 1974. The treasury was interested in the value of any export contract, the Foreign Office was helping in the negotiations.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, Beaven to Boothroyd, 14 October 1974.

⁵²⁸ *The Times*, 15 December 1975.

relationship was to “keep our judgement on China up to date”.⁵²⁹ There were signs of a reappraisal of traditional CoCom attitudes, which would open new doors for Britain in China; and as the Chinese advanced towards their long-term economic objectives their technological needs would grow accordingly. The successful conclusion of the Spey deals meant the Chinese entrusted the future of an important part of their aircraft industry to Britain. This went some way to ensuring the stability of Anglo-Chinese relations for “the next four to five years at least” and was seen as an indication that China would look increasingly to Europe for modern defence technology and equipment.⁵³⁰ The importance of this decision for the Chinese should not be understated. That they decided to go ahead with the deal is evidence that they saw no fundamental clash of interests with Britain developing over the next five years. The task of the Foreign Office then, was to monitor how the rapidly emerging China would fit into the changing world structure of power.⁵³¹ The visit of the Foreign Secretary, Jim Callaghan, in May 1976 was expected to come at a timely moment for the formation of those judgements on which Britain’s future policy would be based.

The official line was that “exports of potential strategic significance are only authorised after the strategic implications involved have been taken into account and after discussions with our allies”.⁵³²

The “outlook remains uncertain” in 1976⁵³³

Ambassador Youde reported from Beijing at the end of 1976 that “it will be evident that the balance sheet for China at the end of 1976 contains some good entries with others of more

⁵²⁹ TNA, FCO 21/1496 FEC 014/2, China: Annual Review for 1975, Youde, 14 January 1976.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter, Paul to Martin, 2 February 1976.

⁵³¹ TNA, FCO 21/1496 FEC 014/2, Letter, Bentley to Youde, 5 February 1976.

⁵³² TNA, FCO 21/1238 FEC 3/348/7, Brief, 9 July 1976.

⁵³³ TNA, FCO 21/ 1555 FEC 014/2, China Annual Review, Youde, 13 January 1977.

doubtful benefit.”⁵³⁴ For China this year proved to be “a most extraordinary year” in which the drama began early.⁵³⁵ On 8 January the Premier Zhou Enlai died.⁵³⁶ He was aged 78 and had been suffering from cancer since 1972 although it had only been in the months leading up to his death that he had ceased receiving foreign visitors.⁵³⁷ This was swiftly followed by the ousting of his heir apparent Deng Xiaoping. In Deng’s place emerged Hua Guofeng as Acting Premier but the death of Chairman Mao Zedong later in the year on 9 September, divided the Chinese political ranks further with the radical ‘Gang of Four’ launching what was effectively a coup d’état. They were arrested under charges of “treasonous behaviour” and Hua subsequently became Chairman of the Central Committee.⁵³⁸ Youde noted though, that despite the internal upheavals the pattern of Chinese external policy showed little change.⁵³⁹

In Britain too there was change in the political hierarchy. On 16 March Harold Wilson shocked his Cabinet by announcing his resignation as Prime Minister.⁵⁴⁰ From the beginning of this period of leadership, fellow Ministers and officials had detected a lethargy about Wilson that was troubling, he rambled in Cabinet meetings and sometimes failed to sum up his points at all.⁵⁴¹ Aware that he was suffering the first stages of early-onset Alzheimer’s disease, he decided to resign his post of Prime Minister. Such was their close relationship that Wilson had informed Callaghan of his decision before he made the official announcement.⁵⁴² It was his Foreign Secretary who subsequently became Prime Minister. Callaghan was

⁵³⁴ Ibid., China Annual Review, Youde, 13 January 1977.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., Letter, Samuel to Youde, 7 March 1977.

⁵³⁶ P. Cheng, M. Lenstz and J. Spence (ed.), *The Search for Modern China*, (London, 1999) pp. 443-446.

⁵³⁷ *The Times*, 9 January 1977.

⁵³⁸ Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 294-297.

⁵³⁹ TNA, FCO 21/ 1555 FEC 014/2, China Annual Review, Youde, 13 January 1977.

⁵⁴⁰ *The Times*, 17 March 1976; See also, B. Donoghue, *Downing Street Diary* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005) pp. 696-723.

⁵⁴¹ Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its holders since 1945*, p. 366.

⁵⁴² J. Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Collins, 1987) pp. 386-387.

formally announced leader of the Labour Party on 5 April after a three stage ballot.⁵⁴³ Anthony Crosland took over from Callaghan as Foreign Secretary and in doing so took responsibility for the planned visit to China in May, the date of which had been set by Callaghan two years previously. Crosland's visit was the only Ministerial visit to China of 1976 and bilateral relations were markedly more quiet than the previous year.⁵⁴⁴ Although the visit enabled the new Foreign Secretary to meet and form judgement on the new Chinese Premier Hua, it did not, as was hoped bring resolution to the Air Service Agreement on which the issue of Taiwan remained a sticking point.⁵⁴⁵ With just ten other low profile delegations visiting China in that year, the enthusiasm for the Sino-British relationship so apparent during Edward Heath's Premiership was almost undetectable.⁵⁴⁶ Richard Samuel, Head of the Far East Department, wrote to Youde, "I know that you, like us, will be concerned to find ways of putting more substance into our political relations".⁵⁴⁷ Youde replied to agree that "it is disappointing that we have no high level visits in prospect" but that he had been informed by the Foreign Office that "our concern during the first half of the year with the EEC, the Commonwealth Conference and like events ... would make such visits on the government side difficult during 1977".⁵⁴⁸

Harold Wilson's Labour Government of 1974-1976 appeared less enthusiastic about having close links with China, especially when compared to the previous Heath Administration. The number of high level Ministerial visits either planned or carried out showed a steady decline

⁵⁴³ *The Times*, 6 April 1976.

⁵⁴⁴ TNA, FCO 21/ 1555 FEC 014/2, Letter, Samuel to Youde, 7 March 1977.

⁵⁴⁵ TNA, FCO 21/1504 FEC 026/548/6, Tel no. 998, Crosland to Washington, 13 May 1976.

⁵⁴⁶ Visits to China were undertaken by: the Electrical Industries Association, a British delegation of young lecturers in Chinese studies, the Young Conservatives, a British Librarians delegation, the Federation of Construction Equipment and Cranes, the British Pump Manufacturers Association, a BBC delegation, the National Coal Board, the "48" Group and a delegation from the Westminster Chamber of Commerce.

⁵⁴⁷ TNA, FCO 21/ 1555 FEC 014/2, Letter, Samuel to Youde, 7 March 1977.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter, Youde to Samuel, 14 March 1977.

when compared to the level of diplomatic activity between Britain and China under the Heath Government. Perhaps it could be surmised that during Heath's premiership it was imperative for the two governments to stay in almost daily contact in order to pursue the goal of raising diplomatic contacts to ambassadorial level but that it was ultimately unsustainable as by 1976 the interests and ambitions of the two countries had again diverged, particularly with Wilson aiming for closer ties with the Soviet Union and America. China had become a stronger world power by this time. The role of the Foreign Office after 1974 was to realise the function that the two countries could play to the advantage of the other and this is why the relationship becomes based almost entirely on trade than on diplomatic and cultural exchanges.

It is not surprising therefore that when the storm of international crisis and domestic discontent burst over the Heath government in 1973-74, the new protective wall provided by the Prime Minister's turn towards Europe proved incapable of containing it. The longer term may prove Edward Heath right in his international orientation; in the short run, he was forced to watch an incoming Labour government return the country to the comfortable routines of Atlanticism.

Conclusion

British policy towards China entered a new phase in the early 1970s as the Heath Government explored new lines through which to develop and open diplomatic contacts. By March 1972 full Sino-British diplomatic relations had been accomplished. There followed talks about bilateral relations, high profile Ministerial exchanges and successful commercial deals. Despite the shadow of the Chinese government's resentment of the unequal treaties, and Britain's inherent mistrust of communism, progress had been made in the relationship.

Although initially supporting the Nationalists in the Chinese Civil War, British efforts at accommodation began very quickly after the creation of the People's Republic of China by Chairman Mao Zedong in October 1949. The Attlee Administration recognised the People's Republic as the legal government of China in January 1950 and after the Geneva Conference in 1954, exchanged Chargé d'Affaires. However, for the next twenty years Cold War tensions and China's internal tumult made progress impossible.

By the late 1960s many Whitehall officials felt the time seemed ripe for renewed approaches to China for the upgrading of diplomatic relations. The Chinese had emerged from the Cultural Revolution, the Sino-Soviet Alliance had broken down and their leaders showed signs of being interested in pursuing an entirely new foreign policy. Indeed the Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luo Guibo, approached British Chargé d'Affaires, John Denson, in 1971 suggesting a dialogue regarding the upgrade of Sino-British diplomatic relations could be opened. Prime Minister Edward Heath and his Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, responded enthusiastically. There followed months of complicated and careful negotiations before talks were successfully concluded with the exchange of

Ambassadors on 13 March 1972. With the creation of formal structures for diplomatic relations it became possible to express views on a variety of issues which were often addressed in an open and frank manner. This allowed British policy makers greater insight into China's attitudes and policy strategies, which would prove to be of great importance in the evolution of Asian affairs.

Solidifying this new, vital, bilateral relationship, intense diplomatic, cultural and commercial exchanges took place during the remainder of the Heath Government, until its electoral defeat in February 1974. There were individual visits to China by Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Royle, Minister for Aerospace, Michael Heseltine and Minister for Trade and Industry, Peter Walker. In return, Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ji Bengfei, visited Britain in conjunction with an almost constant exchange of language students, musicians, acrobats and exhibitions. Successful trade deals were struck selling Spey jet engines to China and constructive talks initiated the Air Services Agreement, a contract designed to permit the first direct commercial air route between the two countries. The election of Harold Wilson as Prime Minister in February 1974 coincided with a marked decline in the number of such diplomatic and cultural interactions. Indeed, there were just two Ministerial visits to China under Wilson's second Labour Administration: by Minister of State at the Department of Industry, Lord Beswick, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Trade, Eric Deakins. The Pandas, Chia Chia and Ching Ching, were presented to Britain, and delivered to London Zoo, during Wilson's premiership but this diplomatic gesture had been instigated by Heath, encouraged by his close personal connections to the Chinese leadership. Under the Labour administration, there did remain, however, a sustained effort to maintain commercial ties with China, with further Spey deals being signed but the Air Services Agreement was not finalised.

Britain's China Policy under Edward Heath

The primary stumbling block to establishing full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China had been the position of Britain towards Taiwan. This issue was made manifest in two ways, in Chinese representation at the United Nations and in Britain's diplomatic presence in Taiwan.

Britain had initially recognised the Republic of China (located on Taiwan) as the Chinese representative at the United Nations. However, after the Communist victory in 1949 and Britain's subsequent *de jure* recognition of Mao's regime, officials in Whitehall faced the difficult task of altering their voting perspective; the Foreign Office had worked on the assumption that once it had recognised the People's Republic, it would have to accept it replacing the Republic of China at the United Nations.⁵⁴⁹ During the 1950s London felt compelled to adhere to Washington's moratorium on backing Beijing's entry with British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Roger Makins, explaining, "It is a sense of comradeship, not real agreement, that impels us".⁵⁵⁰ However, from 1961 onwards, Britain followed a consistent policy to support the representation of Beijing at the United Nations and in 1971, under Edward Heath's government, altered her vote, no longer supporting the US-sponsored Important Question Resolution. This paved the way for the People's Republic to take her seat in the Security Council and fulfilled one of the preconditions Beijing had set for better Sino-British relations.

⁵⁴⁹ TNA, CAB 129/37, CP(49)248, 12 December 1949.

⁵⁵⁰ TNA, FO 371/115213, New York to Foreign Office, 6 September 1955. See also, V.S. Kaufman, "Chirep": The Anglo-American Dispute over Chinese Representation in the United Nations 1950-1971', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 115, no. 461 (April 2000), pp. 354-377.

The second precondition to the exchange of Ambassadors, set by Beijing in 1971, was confirmation of Taiwan's legal status and the withdrawal of the British Consulate there. Foreign Office officials were hesitant about this but recognised that a new world order was emerging and this was an important opportunity to consolidate links with a country which would become integral to this new status quo.⁵⁵¹ London agreed to remove official representation on Taiwan (whilst ensuring that trade with Taiwan would not be affected by the terms of the agreement and the withdrawal of the British Consulate there) but the legal status of the Republic of China presented policy makers with a diplomatic challenge.⁵⁵² During the detailed and protracted negotiations to exchange ambassadors, the Far Eastern Department in the Foreign Office finally devised a formula stating that "the Taiwan Question is China's internal affair to be settled by the Chinese people themselves". Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home agreed this to be legally acceptable as it implied the effective administration of Taiwan by China but did not commit Whitehall to its sovereignty. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs similarly agreed to this statement and on 13 March 1972 Britain and China exchanged Ambassadors, marking the opening of full diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In the period after the exchange of Ambassadors, the contacts between Britain and China, at all different levels, were plentiful. The visits of Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Royle, and Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, in 1972 were constructive and highly significant. These visits provided the first opportunity for direct discussions between the Foreign Ministers of Britain and China since the Geneva Conferences of 1954 and 1961-2. They reflected on major international issues together, in addition to agreeing on a cultural exchange scheme. In 1973, two official visits to China by

⁵⁵¹ TNA, FCO 21/1228, FEC 1/6, China Annual Review, Addis, 14 June 1974.

⁵⁵² S. Tsang, *The Cold War's Odd Couple* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006) pp.61-82.

the Minister for Aerospace, Michael Heseltine, and Minister for Trade and Industry, Peter Walker, heralded a great year for bilateral trade in which British exports to China increased to £80 million compared to £31.5 million in 1972.

An investigation into the planning of Edward Heath's visit to China offers a valuable insight into the nature and delicacy of the negotiations involved and also into the objectives the policy makers had for the relationship. The main purpose of the trip was to set the seal on the improvement in bilateral relations, emphasising to the Chinese the importance which Britain attached to "as close a relationship with them as geography and differences of political system will allow".⁵⁵³ The successful negotiations for the exchange of animals culminating in two pandas being housed in London Zoo, largely implemented due to Heath's close personal relationship with Mao, indicated an emerging robust bilateral relationship.

Domestically, Edward Heath's period as Prime Minister was fraught with difficulties. Initial attempts to follow monetarist policies failed, high inflation and unemployment blocked his attempts at reforming the increasingly militant Trade Unions. The country suffered a further bout of inflation in 1973 as a result of the OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) cartel raising oil prices, and this in turn led to renewed demands for wage increases in the coal industry. The government refused to accede to the miner's demands, resulting in a series of stoppages and massive attempts to ration power, including the three-day week. In order to placate his dissenters Heath called a snap General Election for January 1974, meaning, reluctantly, he was to postpone his visit to China. However, it is clear from

⁵⁵³ TNA, PREM 15/2019, Briefing paper, Brimelow, 15 November 1973.

the two Conservative manifestoes of 1974 that Heath and the Party regarded the formalisation and improvement in relations with China to be a great achievement for the country.⁵⁵⁴

Edward Heath rearranged his trip to China, travelling in May 1974, in his new capacity as Leader of the Opposition. The pomp which accompanied Heath's arrival in Beijing clearly reflected the high esteem in which the Chinese held him, indeed, when referring to the January 1974 General Election, Chairman Mao Zedong told Heath, "I cast my vote for you".⁵⁵⁵ Mao was encouraged by Heath's pro-European Community, anti-Soviet stance, indeed the Chinese certainly saw scope for indulging in diplomacy in the European Community in order to strengthen Europe's opposition to the Soviet Union's subtle policies of détente. Britain, then, held a special position both as an element capable of strengthening European Union and as being sceptical towards Soviet advances.⁵⁵⁶ Therefore it could be surmised that the foreign policies of the Heath Government with the European-focussed Edward Heath and the more global-minded Alec Douglas-Home complemented the Chinese foreign policy in the same years and made the foundations of the relationship a relatively easy one to forge. It is interesting to note that Britain and China did not have a "power" relationship with each other like that between the Soviet Union and Japan, nor an ideological difference as insurmountable as that between the Soviet Union and the United States. They were not allies or enemies, merely strangers.

In terms of administration, Prime Minister Heath took a keen interest in Britain's China Policy, asking for and receiving regular briefings, and discussing the general features with the

⁵⁵⁴ Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 'Firm Action for a Fair Britain', February 1974; Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 'Putting Britain First', October 1974.

⁵⁵⁵ E. Heath, 'When West meets East', Paper written for the UK Chinese Embassy, 2003.

Deng Xiaoping later expressed similar sentiments.

⁵⁵⁶ *The Economist*, 4 November 1972, p. 54.

Foreign Secretary.⁵⁵⁷ Comments by Douglas-Home in his letters and telegrams and Heath's enthusiasm for arranging an official visit to China are indicators of the Prime Minister's support for the improved ties between the two countries.⁵⁵⁸ Heath also conferred with his European allies, particularly the French President, Georges Pompidou, on establishing complementary China policies. However, in the upper echelons of politics, Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home was the dominant figure in exploring the issue of China: he encouraged officials in the Far East Department to devise draft after draft of agreements on the exchange of ambassadors until a compromise was found and his Assistant Private Secretary, Patrick Grattan, communicated with the Americans to share opinions on their respective China policies. Douglas-Home, in other words, was the driving force for change, wanting Britain to "cultivate exchanges at all levels" with China.⁵⁵⁹

Through analysing the exchange of ambassadors, the diplomatic and high level Ministerial visits which followed, it is clear that the decision makers of the China policy were very much based in the Far Eastern Department. Between June 1970 and February 1974 the Sino-British relationship was on the agenda of only seven Cabinet meetings, this was not the forum where the future directions of the bilateral relationship were structured.⁵⁶⁰ Decisions tended to evolve from a narrow circle of co-ordinated efforts to push new initiatives in China. John Morgan, Head of the Far East Department, oversaw the exchange of ambassadors and was responsible for approving the final wording for the agreement. There was a high level of input from John Addis in Beijing, drawing on his considerable diplomatic experience and

⁵⁵⁷ TNA, FO 676/567 FEC 3/16, Letter, Morgan to Samuel, 10 January 1972. Heath, of his own accord, sent a Christmas card to Zhou Enlai in December 1971.

⁵⁵⁸ TNA, FO 676/566, 3/5, Letter, Morgan to Addis, 23 February 1972.

⁵⁵⁹ TNA, CAB 129/165/18, Note by Douglas-Home, 6 November 1972.

⁵⁶⁰ TNA, CAB 128/49/1, 5 January 1971; CAB 128/49/24, 6 May 1971; CAB 128/49/40, 22 July 1971; CAB 128/49/43, 3 August 1971; CAB 128/49/52, 28 October 1971; CAB 128/50/11, 24 February 1972; CAB 128/52/11; 21 June 1973.

deep understanding of the Chinese culture. He was the primary means of confidential communications with the Chinese government and played a vital role in carrying communications back and forth.

Britain's China Policy under Harold Wilson

The period of Harold Wilson's second Government, February 1974 to April 1976, witnessed a shift in the priorities to Britain's policies to China. The Labour Government responded to a rapidly changing international order where a complex interdependence of trade, money and communications began to change the structure of international power, shifting the subject matter of diplomacy from defence to economics.⁵⁶¹ Trade became ever more important to the global order. In consequence, the Foreign Office files of the Far Eastern Department show a marked increase in the need for its officials to liaise with the Department of Trade and the Treasury in dealings with China. The number of cultural exchanges decreased markedly when compared to those under the Heath government. Indeed only two official Ministerial visits to China were undertaken during Wilson's premiership: by Lord Beswick, Minister of State at the Department of Industry in September 1974 and by Eric Deakins, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Trade, in March 1975. Reflecting the success of these visits, commercially the Sino-British relationship remained good. A hugely lucrative deal with Rolls Royce was signed in 1975 but the Air Services Agreement disappointingly was stalled for many years. This was due to the diplomatic side of the agreement rather than any trade conditions. Perhaps if relations with the Chinese hierarchy were as good with Wilson and his Foreign Secretary Jim Callaghan as they had been with Heath and Douglas-Home, the troubling issues could have been resolved quickly and effectively. Mao certainly seemed

⁵⁶¹ A. Buchan, *The End of the Postwar Era* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974) pp. 302-3.

more willing to work with Heath than his Labour Party counterpart Harold Wilson, between whose two periods of premiership Heath was sandwiched.

Although Wilson's October 1974 manifesto included a pledge to further improve relations with China, the first months of his premiership were consumed with renegotiating Britain's entry to the EEC. China was a staunch advocate of Britain's continuing role in Europe, so with this prospect diminishing and the perception that the new British government cared little for the Sino relationship persisting, Beijing began to look to West Germany to be her "champion in Europe" instead of Britain.⁵⁶² Britain was economically weak, wavered in its attitude to the EEC and was suspected of seeking closer relations with the Soviet Union; improving Sino-British relations seemed increasingly out of reach.

The Cabinet and Foreign Office records bear no trace of Wilson's involvement in or views on China, nor do his memoirs covering this term of government. Wilson was certainly more concerned with the Anglo-Soviet and Anglo-American relationships. He visited the Soviet Union with Callaghan in 1975 but did not plan any visits to China. Callaghan also did not appear to be as instrumental as Douglas-Home in Britain's China Policy, but he did become involved if and when he thought he was needed. When dealing with the sale of Rolls Royce engines to China, Callaghan oversaw the deal and eased tensions with the other CoCom members to ensure the sale went through successfully.⁵⁶³ He had been invited to China while in his role of Shadow Foreign Secretary in 1973 and after accepting the invitation scheduled the visit for two years hence, clearly showing that other foreign affairs were taking precedence, most notably, Europe. In the event Callaghan never did visit China in an official

⁵⁶² TNA, FCO 21/1283, Letter, Wilford to Galsworthy, 29 October 1974.

⁵⁶³ TNA, FCO 21/1394 FEC 21/1, Background note, Alexander, undated.

capacity as he became Prime Minister in April 1976 and his new Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland fulfilled the obligations of the trip instead.

China simply did not figure so prominently in the minds of Wilson and Callaghan and they were happy to pass out most issues to trade Ministers. Indeed even by October 1974 it was noted in the Foreign Office, by Assistant Under-Secretary, Michael Wilford, who had witnessed Sino-British relations under both the Heath and Wilson premierships, "relations remain good but we are already beginning to coast gently and perceptibly downhill".⁵⁶⁴ The Sino-British relationship was taking on a different character. The Chinese administration was suspicious of Wilson's increasingly close relationship with the Soviets and placed less emphasis on Britain as a diplomatic partner and more as a reliable trading partner. The Foreign Office and the Department of Trade conferred more frequently during the Wilson government. However, there was still a high level of communication between William Bentley of the Far Eastern Department and Edward Youde, Britain's Ambassador in China. Youde also worked hard to represent the opinions of the Chinese policy makers in order to guide the direction of British strategy.

Alongside the growth in efforts to improve trade, by 1974 and especially by 1976, China was in a much stronger position in the world than in 1970 when Heath became Prime Minister. China had wider global diplomatic relations in place and in particular, strengthened relationships with other countries in Western Europe; perhaps China did not need Britain as much as she did in earlier in the decade. The Wilson government therefore had to make an adjustment to the China Policy as a reaction to new circumstances. They chose to pursue a relationship based heavily on trade rather than diplomacy. One Foreign Office official,

⁵⁶⁴ TNA, FCO 21/1241 FEC 3/548/14, Letter, Wilford to Brimelow, 30 October 1974.

Richard Evans, speculated on the future of the relationship, "We must not forget that we enjoy good relations with China because the Chinese decided that they wanted good relations with us ... the successors to Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai might decide otherwise".⁵⁶⁵ The sale of the Rolls Royce engines and technology from Britain to China was very successful, for both countries, as this was a deal on which China placed much value. Looking at the Air Services Agreement, however, a deal that Britain wanted, China negotiated hard and did not back down on her terms. However, obstinacy on one level does not mean the Chinese did not want diplomatic relations, rather that they were simply tough negotiators. By 1976 the political aims of Britain and China had diverged again so far that it was increasingly difficult to maintain a diplomatic relationship but the significant factor of trade ensured that the relationship remained.

It is interesting to note that since 1967, and the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution, Hong Kong had not emerged as a point of friction between the two states. During this period, Beijing had no wish to alter the status quo over Hong Kong as the Colony provided China with thirty percent of its foreign currency, furthermore, Hong Kong was consistently the leading market for China's exports and its second largest partner in overall trade. Britain governed the Colony without repressing the Communist organisations there and so China did not rock the diplomatic boat in their pursuit of relations with Britain.

China and the United States

Britain's China policy 1970-76 was conducted in the context of the sudden thaw in Sino-American relations and Henry Kissinger's subsequent secret trip to Beijing in 1971. While London applauded the new nature of the Sino-American relationship, the failure to inform

⁵⁶⁵ TNA, FCO 21/ 1226 FEC 1/3, Letter, Evans to Youde, 15 January 1974.

them about the initiative caused friction in the Anglo-American relationship, "Regrettably this is not the only example of a somewhat cavalier American attitude to consultation with Allies."⁵⁶⁶ In not informing the Foreign Office of their plans for Nixon to visit China before it was announced to the world, the Americans treated Britain no differently from any of their other allies. The British government, the Foreign Office especially, had grown accustomed to being kept abreast of key facts of United States' policy, of being consulted before other allies. So the Kissinger visit led many in the Far Eastern Department to smart at the failure to consult them.⁵⁶⁷ By the 1970s consultation was less full than in the 1940s and 1950s when opinions on recognising the People's Republic of China, intervention in the Korean War, the establishment of NATO and SEATO and the China seat in the United Nations were all discussed. It was the Korean War and the intervention of Chinese forces which dashed America's considerations of recognising the new People's Republic of China.⁵⁶⁸ It instead led to two decades of United States containment of an expansionist "Red China" which caused the polarisation of their relations with Asia. Britain however, pressed ahead with a policy of engagement. The Vietnam War proved a turning point in the Anglo-American special relationship as Harold Wilson refused to send British troops to support the American offensive.

With regard to their China policies however, despite some resentment about the non-consultation, Britain and the United States worked well together, Americans later took over Consulate support for Britain in Taiwan.⁵⁶⁹ They worked closely together since both were pursuing similar goals. The United States finally transferred diplomatic recognition of China

⁵⁶⁶ TNA, FCO 21/826 Letter, Graham to Moon, 16 July 1971.

⁵⁶⁷ TNA, FCO 21/826, Letter, Moon to McCluney, 16 July 1971.

⁵⁶⁸ Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy, 1949-1950*.

⁵⁶⁹ Hopkins, Kelly, Young, (eds.), *The Washington Embassy: Britain's Ambassadors to the United States 1939-77*, pp. 209-228.

from Taipei to Beijing in the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, on 1 January 1979. The Americans did not have to compromise on the status of Taiwan as Britain had in 1972. Washington reiterated the Shanghai Communiqué's acknowledgment of the Chinese position that there is only one China and that Taiwan is a part of China; Beijing acknowledged that the American people would continue to carry on commercial, cultural, and other unofficial contacts with the people of Taiwan.

China and Europe

Britain's relationship with China during the 1970s served to strengthen its ties to the European Community. Indeed the year 1971 marked a turning point in Chinese-West European relations. In October, for the first time, the West European delegations departed from their former alignment with the United States on the China questions and did not support the resolution to keep a seat for Taiwan in the United Nations. The shift came because it served their new desire to develop contacts with China, several West European governments had accorded diplomatic recognition to China: Italy (November 1970), Austria (May 1971), Turkey (August 1971) and Belgium (October 1971). France had already established ambassadorial links in January 1964 while West Germany formalised diplomatic links with China in October 1972. Thus, it is clear that it was accepted by the countries of Europe that China was of growing importance and a necessary partner in the future of global affairs. The persisting tensions with the Soviet Union and Moscow's increasing attempts to set up a political structure in Asia in which China would be isolated, induced the Chinese leaders to consider carefully the advantages of solid diplomatic relationships between the

People's Republic and Western Europe.⁵⁷⁰ Moreover, after a Chinese reappraisal of the EEC in 1971, China decided it would also like to establish diplomatic links with the Community,

The 10-nation Common Market will have a population of more than 250 million. It will outstrip the United States in gold reserves, output of steel and automobiles as well as the volume of exports and become the largest market for commodities and investment in the West.⁵⁷¹

The European Community extended recognition to China in 1975. During Heath's tenure as Prime Minister, the European dimension to Britain's China policy was particularly notable and was another factor that diminished under Wilson.

In the twenty-first century, China has emerged as a global power. Integral to modern diplomacy is the need to understand the foundations on which a relationship is built, especially when these events form recent history, just forty years in the past. The Sino-American rapprochement could be considered the momentum behind the Chinese breakthrough with Western Europe however, as this study has shown, there were solid achievements in Britain's China policy which ran parallel to United States developments. The story of China opening up to the West usually revolves around President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 and the signing of the Sino-American Communiqué. That hypothesis, however, omits the importance of Britain's role in the breakthrough. Britain had a consistent China policy from the creation of the People's Republic in 1949 until 1972 when full diplomatic relations were formalised. The exchange of ambassadors achieved tangible results with commercial, cultural and diplomatic successes.

⁵⁷⁰ D. Shambaugh, 'China and Europe', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 519, China's Foreign Relations (January 1992), pp. 101-114 at p. 106.

⁵⁷¹ *Hsin Hua News Agency*, 29 June 1971 cited in G. Bressi, 'China and Western Europe', *Asia Survey*, vol. 12, no. 10 (October 1972), pp.819-845.

This study was undertaken to gain a detailed understanding of the Sino-British relationship in the 1970s: the role of personalities in the decision-making, the mechanics of the decision making and the role of these events in future studies of Britain's foreign policy during this decade. It is a study of the dynamics between a developing political system and an established political system, of polarised ideologies and attitudes.

The mechanics of recognition have never been studied before, nor the diplomatic successes which swiftly followed. This thesis has explained the process by which contacts with China were established, identified the key individuals in decision making process and their respective roles and also identified the extent to which the two governments during this study put their individual stamp on the China policy. It has shown that Edward Heath's foreign policy was more global than the Euro-centrism of which he is often accused. The study has also sought to place the Sino-British relationship in the context of the Anglo-American and Anglo-EEC relationships which formed the two main facets of Britain's foreign policy during the 1970s. In narratives of British foreign policy in the twentieth century such as John W. Young, *British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* and David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, there is mention of these episodes but no comprehensive studies exist. In future studies, this episode should be given increased focus as a solid forward-looking, post-colonial, Asian-based British foreign policy.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷² Young, *Twentieth Century Diplomacy*; D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 2000).

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