



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

13 JUNE 1989

During Question Time in the Senate today, Senator Hill asked Senator Walsh to table a letter which I had sent to Premier Li Peng of China.

As a matter of policy and practice, I do not release the contents of my private correspondence with foreign Heads of Government on issues of on-going policy importance.

In view, however, of the depth of public interest and concern in Australia over the tragic events in China, I have agreed to make an exception in this case and a copy of the letter will be tabled in the Senate at the earliest opportunity.



PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

12 JUN 1989

Leon Pridemore,

I write to you with a deep sense of tragedy and sympathy for the people of China, following the terrible events of the past few days.

The Australian Government and people have expressed their condemnation of the brutal massacre of unarmed civilians in Beijing by military forces under the control of your Government. I do not seek to conceal the depth of feeling among Australians, nor my own sense of outrage, on this issue.

But my purpose in writing to you goes beyond this. I am concerned with the future of China, the future of the Asia-Pacific region and of the world, and the future of Australia's relations with China.

For nearly two decades no country has done more to develop friendly and cooperative bilateral relations with China than has Australia. Moreover, our Government has been active in spreading the good word about developments in China and their significance among our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific and among western countries with which we have close relations.

We have regarded the emergence of China along the path of economic reform and openness to the outside world as one of the most positive developments, regionally and globally, of our time. Australians have drawn great encouragement from the progress and stability achieved within China and from the constructive role China has played in our neighbourhood and on the international stage. This makes the tragedy and the set back of the events of June 1989 so much the greater.

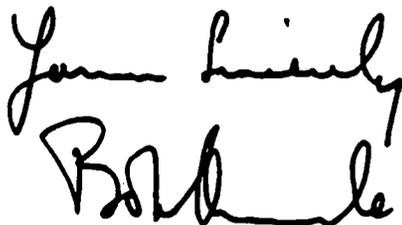
The future interests of China will, I am convinced, continue to be served by economic reform and the open door policy. But, as I have said on a number of occasions to Chinese leaders, this process will inevitably create pressures for political reform. That

this is inevitable makes it the task and challenge of leadership to accommodate these pressures peacefully and by dialogue. Only in this way will the great creative capacities of the Chinese people be deployed fully to achieve the goal of modernisation.

Tragically, on 4 and 5 June the Government of China took a different - an abhorrently different - way. That tragedy will not be forgotten. But, as we look to the future, it is vitally in China's interests that armed violence against innocent civilians should cease. Equally, it is not in China's interests to repress intellectuals, teachers, students, workers who have recently sought to express their political views peacefully. Thus, I earnestly hope that all those people, including people in positions of high responsibility, who have expressed contrary views, will be treated with dignity and humanity. Any other course of action will not only further damage China's international reputation. It will directly undermine efforts for the economic and technological advancement of the Chinese people.

I make these comments out of a spirit of genuine concern for China and of deep admiration for your great country. My comments are dictated by the affection I feel for the people of China and my profound conviction that the world needs a China, prosperous, peaceful and in harmony with other nations.

My plea to you is to replace the processes of violence with the processes of dialogue, the processes of repression with the processes of tolerance, the processes of suspicion with the processes of trust. On this basis, China will in time be able to resume the path of reform and modernisation. And on this basis, Australia remains prepared to play a constructive and cooperative role with China, as it has since 1972.

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "James L. Birch". There are two lines of handwriting, with the second line being more prominent and possibly representing a surname or a specific part of the name.

His Excellency Mr Li Peng
Premier of the State Council of the
People's Republic of China
BEIJING
CHINA