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Iain C. Jar

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We spoke. The Plaxico did a superb  
arrangement: my polaroid photo may  
not do it justice!

2 June 1985.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE  
LONDON, SW1A 2AH



PREM 19/1426



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## FLOWERS FOR CHINESE PREMIER

The basket of plants in Premier Zhao Ziyang's suite, with a welcoming card from the Prime Minister, is composed of flowers and other plants of Chinese origin. These include: bamboo, ginkgo, pink peonies, peach-pink azaleas, red miniature roses and cerise orchids. The symbolism of some is of particular interest.

Bamboo: zhu. The bamboo is symbolic of the upright and honest man. This species, Arundinaria murieliae is from Sichuan province, renowned for its bamboos and the Giant Panda which feeds on them. The Wangjianglou Park in the capital, Chengdu, has over 140 varieties. This species was described by the botanist Ernest Wilson (author of "China, Mother of Gardens") as "the handsomest Bamboo I have ever seen" and was introduced by him into cultivation outside China in 1910.

Ginkgo: yinxing. The Maidenhair tree, Ginkgo biloba is cultivated from wild stock only found in China, where it is a protected species. It grows slowly and to a great age, specimens over 1,000 years old being not uncommon. It is also known as the "grandfather-grandson" tree: the grandfather plants it and his grandchildren pick the fruit. The nut is highly nutritious and an extract of its leaf is used in treating cardio-vascular illnesses.

Peony: mudan. Peonies have been cultivated in China for over 2,000 years. Those grown in the ancient capital of Loyang in Premier Zhao's home province of Henan are particularly renowned. It is a symbol of spring and is associated with riches and nobility.

Orchid: Lan. The orchid is one of the "Four Gentlemen" of Chinese art and horticulture, symbolising the four seasons and the qualities of the ideal gentleman. The others are plum, chrysanthemum and bamboo.

The basket was arranged by Moyses Stevens.

Far Eastern Department  
FCO  
2 June 1985