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30 November 1981

Sir Nicholas Henderson GCMG  
WASHINGTON

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1) R. Williams  
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R.H.S. 1/29

Dear Nick,

POSSIBLE VISIT BY PRESIDENT REAGAN

1. At your meeting with the Secretary of State on 11 November it was agreed that it would be particularly useful to have a visit by President Reagan and that we should go for something in the early spring, when we had reason to think that the President might in any case be contemplating a visit to Europe including France and Germany. It was also agreed that it would be particularly important, even if a full blown State Visit were not feasible, that The Queen should be very much involved.

2. Since then we have been able to clear our minds about the State Visit programme for next year, and to obtain an indication from the Palace what dates in the first part of the year really would be extremely difficult, probably quite impossible, for The Queen.

To this should be added the fact that the Pope will be in Britain on a pastoral visit from 28 May to 2 June. A clash with the President would clearly be out of the question, but we thought the machine could manage a fairly rapid succession if that should become necessary. In principle any other dates might be possible, although diaries are filling up and the sooner we can get something pencilled in the better.

3. As far as the State Visit programme is concerned you should know (for your own information) that the Sultan of Oman has been invited for 16-19 March and that Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands is likely to be invited in the autumn. The June slot, 8-11 June, has been kept open for King Juan Carlos of Spain, but it is increasingly unlikely that it will be either possible or desirable to invite him for next year. Moreover, The Queen had been committed to an outward State Visit to Sweden in the first week of June but that has now been postponed to 1983 because of Queen Silvia's impending baby, so we have unexpected gaps in The Queen's programme for the first two weeks of June.





4. On another front the French are pressing hard to fix the dates for the Economic Summit in France on 6-8 June. The Prime Minister has indicated that 8 June would not suit her (because of the possible State Visit) and there are other arguments for postponing the Economic Summit to July, so as to allow for proper preparation and consultation with non-participants. But the French are so insistent on these particular dates that we suspect it might be because they have received indications that President Reagan could manage them. Soundings that Robert Armstrong has taken with Rashish in the State Department and Attali in Paris did not confirm a commitment, but it seems to be at least a possibility.
5. As you know the Secretary of State thought that June would be too late for the purpose you had in mind when you discussed the possibility with him. But it seems a little unlikely that the President would come over twice in the first half of next year (unless, for example, a strong move developed later on to have a NATO Ministerial Summit in Europe).
6. Against this background I believe the time has come for us to start pressing the White House for a clearer indication. You could perhaps say that French moves to fix the date for the European Summit have led us to wonder whether this indicated a firm commitment by President Reagan to be on this side of the Atlantic in early June. If so, we would very much like to welcome him for a bilateral visit to Britain either before or after the Summit. You should add that it would be The Queen's intention to invite the President to stay at Windsor (which would be very much more convenient from the logistical point of view). As the President would realise both The Queen's and the Prime Minister's diaries were filling up rapidly and it would be helpful to fix dates soon, so that we could make arrangements to receive him here in the way in which we would like. A fortiori, if the President were thinking of crossing the Atlantic earlier in the year, we ought to be getting on with the arrangements.
7. Could you therefore please discuss these matters at whatever level you think appropriate in the White House and State Department, renew Mrs Thatcher's invitation of 27 February on instructions and do your best to move matters towards precise dates, steering them if possible towards the dates which suit us and away from those which are manifestly impossible.

W → us,  
Michael

Michael Palliser

bcc: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB CVO  
Cabinet Office

The Rt Hon Sir Philip Moore KCB KCVO CMG

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Private Secretary

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NAmD