

From: The Rt Hon Dr David Owen MP



Copied to: B. Ingham
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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dear Prime Minister

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Thank you for your letter of 9 March. I fully recognise that no discourtesy was intended by the Government and that it was your intention to hold the fullest consultation at the appropriate moment over President Reagan's visit. Like you, I am sorry that details of the arrangements for the visit leaked prematurely. However, I recognise that these things happen and I am very ready that consultations should begin through the usual channels as soon as is convenient.

The Parliamentary Committee of the Social Democratic Party discussed some of the issues and it might help you if I gave you our preliminary view. On balance had we been consulted privately prior to the leak I think we would have favoured the Royal Gallery rather than Westminster Hall but we do not believe that now this should be made a sticking point. We wish to ensure that President Reagan's visit is a success and that no action is taken which could be interpreted by the American people as an affront to their Head of State. The Social Democrat MPs will, therefore, be happy to listen to the President make a major speech before members of both Houses of Parliament, wherever the meeting is held.

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP