

FILE

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Minister

Subject



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 June 1981

Dear Private Secretary,

Ministers' Visits Overseas

This letter is to remind Departments of the need to consult the FCO at Private Secretary level as early as possible in the planning of Ministerial visits overseas.

On a number of occasions recently, the FCO has only learned relatively late in the day that a Minister from another Department is planning an overseas visit. This is not simply a bureaucratic quibble. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary feel strongly that maximum benefit will only be derived from Ministerial visits overseas if these visits are carefully targetted.

To achieve this, it is essential for all Departments to follow Section VI of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". As this section makes quite clear, the Foreign Office must be consulted, and through it the diplomatic post concerned, at the outset of planning for a Ministerial visit, by Private Secretary letter.

I should stress that it is not sufficient for Departments to consult posts directly without informing the FCO, to inform the FCO at desk level, or to inform the FCO when formal approval from the Prime Minister and the Whips is requested.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries to Ministers in charge of Departments and to David Wright (Cabinet Office). I should be grateful if copy recipients could ensure that this letter is shown to all Ministerial Private Offices within their Departments.

Yours sincerely,

William Rickett

The Private Secretary



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 June 1981

PERSONAL

Dear Wilke,

Ministers' Visits Overseas

As you know, on a number of recent occasions the FCO has only learnt relatively late in the day that a Minister from another Department is planning an overseas visit. In the case of the recent visits by the Secretary of State and Minister of State for Defence to Washington, HM Ambassador at Washington heard rumours of the visits from the Americans and from members of his defence staff long before we were able to give him official confirmation through FCO channels. Another example was the recent visit to South America by the Parliamentary Secretary at the Department of Transport. The FCO had heard indirectly that Mr Clarke was planning to visit South America long before the first official intimation in Anthony Mayer's letter of 9 April to Mike Pattison. The Department of Transport in fact sent telegrams about the visit directly to our Embassies in Argentina, Chile and Venezuela in March and again in April. A further example has cropped up this week, in the letter from the Department of Energy to you seeking approval for a visit to Japan and India in September. The Department of Energy, like the other Departments mentioned above (and we could quote other examples) have not first consulted the FCO by Private Secretary letter at the earliest possible stage, as laid down in Section VI of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

This is not merely a bureaucratic quibble. On a number of occasions the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has had doubts about the utility or the timing of a Ministerial visit overseas, but has discovered that arrangements for the visit are so far advanced that it would cause embarrassment to his colleagues and to the host government for him to intervene. If the maximum benefit is to be derived from Ministerial visits
/overseas



overseas, the visits should be carefully targetted (as the Prime Minister herself pointed out following her tour of the Gulf) and we should seek the advice of our diplomatic posts on the best possible timing. We cannot coordinate our advice effectively if, as in the case of the Department of Transport, Home Departments send telegrams about visits directly to Ambassadors without informing the FCO: or if, as in the case of the Department of Energy, a junior FCO official is told in vague terms that a visit is under consideration, but is specifically enjoined not to consult the Ambassador concerned.

We therefore think it would be useful if you could draw the attention of Private Offices in all Home Departments to Section VI of "Questions of Procedure". Without of course referring to specific examples (for the sinners named above are not alone, but merely those who have come to notice recently) you may wish to stress that it is essential to consult the FCO (and through it, the diplomatic post concerned) at the outset of planning for a Ministerial visit, by Private Secretary letter. It is not sufficient to inform the FCO officially of a visit at the relatively late stage when formal approval from the Prime Minister and the Whips is normally requested.

yours ever

Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

W Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street

Ref. A05046

MR ALEXANDER

Top Copy filed
Trade: Ministers
Co-ordination
with businessmen on visits
abroad.

Official Committee on Exports

In your letter of 7 May to the Department of Trade you recorded the Prime Minister's views on the need for proper advance preparation of all aspects of Ministerial visits abroad and noted that I was considering the establishment of machinery which might facilitate both this co-ordination and the follow-up to Ministerial visits. I have now had the opportunity of discussing this with the Permanent Secretaries of the departments directly concerned. They agree with me that on balance the establishment of a new Official Committee on Exports would be an improvement to the present co-ordination arrangements.

2. I am therefore making arrangements for this new Official Committee - to be designated EX(O) - to be established immediately with the following terms of reference:-

"To provide for interdepartmental co-ordination of the commercial aspects of Prime Ministerial and other senior Ministerial visits abroad and to report on such export matters as the Ministerial Committee on Exports may refer to it."

3. The Committee will be chaired by a Deputy Secretary from the Department of Trade, and will have representatives, generally at Under-Secretary level, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence, the Departments of Industry and Trade, the Cabinet Office, CPRS, the No 10 Policy Unit and the Export Credit Guarantee Department.

4. Day-to-day problems and the detailed planning of Ministerial visits will continue to be handled by the existing machinery. Defence sales matters will be for the newly-established Ministerial Committee on Defence Sales. But the establishment of this new Official Committee should mean that in the future different elements in this country's trading relations with individual countries will be more effectively co-ordinated in planning Ministerial visits, as the Prime Minister has proposed. The Committee will also aim to submit regular reports to Ministers indicating which current contracts are being monitored by the Committee and which are likely to need the assistance of a Ministerial visit.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG
ROBERT ARMSTRONG

11 June 1981



AW seen
Minister
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

3 June 1981

Dear William,

Clive Whitmore wrote on 29 May about proposed Cabinet meetings in September. You may wish to know that Lord Carrington, on present plans, is hoping to be at a Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 15 September and at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24 September. I will, of course, be seeking the Prime Minister's approval for these journeys in due course but I thought you would welcome the advance notice.

I am sending copies of this letter to Barry Hilton (Cabinet Office) and Michael Pownall (Government Whip's Office, House of Lords).

Yours ever

C. Jebb

(C Jebb)
Assistant Private Secretary

William Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1



10 DOWNING STREET

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file

Minister

From the Principal Private Secretary

29 May 1981

Dear Private Secretary,

I wrote to you on 29 April 1981 to let you know that the Prime Minister proposed to hold Cabinet meetings on 10, 17 and 24 September.

This is to say that the date of the meeting planned for 17 September has had to be changed to Tuesday 15 September. I should be grateful if you would keep this new date clear in your Minister's diary.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and the Attorney General and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Alvie Whitmore.

The Private Secretary

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10 DOWNING STREET

Ministers
Trade: ministers co-ordinating
with businessmen on visits abroad:
Apr 8/81

From the Private Secretary

7 May 1981

Range to tell John Rhodes
that a meeting was not
possible with Christopher Sanders.

Dear John,

cf. 8/85.

The Prime Minister has seen the Secretary of State for Trade's minute to her of 1 May about the follow-up to her trip to the Gulf.

The Prime Minister has made one general comment on the question of Ministerial visits overseas. In her view, such visits, including those in which she herself is involved, must be arranged with some particular objective in mind. Visits whose objective is mainly to generate goodwill achieve, in the Prime Minister's view, little if anything. It is firm agreements on policy issues and, above all, contracts that we should be pursuing.

To this end, the Prime Minister believes that more attention should be paid to the preparation of individual visits and to the concerting of series of visits. All the groundwork should be done in advance. Where contracts are at issue, all those aspects which are affected by Government decisions, e.g. ECGD terms; Industry Act aid; contractual conditions for which Government Departments are responsible, etc., need to be cleared up in advance. This will usually mean that serious and co-ordinated preparation for a Ministerial visit should begin many months before the visit takes place. (In this context, I assume that thought is already being given to the commercial aspects of the Prime Minister's forthcoming visits to Kuwait, Bahrain and Pakistan: my letter of today's date to Ian Ellison about a methanol plant project in Bahrain is relevant.) I understand that Sir Robert Armstrong is at present considering the establishment of machinery which might facilitate such co-ordination and, subsequently, follow-up.

On specific points in the Secretary of State's minute:

- (a) The Prime Minister is sceptical about the value of a further Ministerial visit to Kuwait immediately after her own visit there at the end of September;

/ (b)

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- (b) The Prime Minister does not wish to pursue the idea of giving a keynote speech to a CBI seminar on Gulf markets. She will be addressing the CBI in mid-June and will aim to include in her speech on that occasion a passage about trade with the Gulf - and with India;
- (c) The Prime Minister would in principle be prepared to entertain the participants in the FT/CBI seminar on Saudi Arabia. However, diary considerations may make it difficult to arrange this. We will be getting in touch with you.

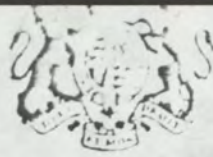
I am sending copies of this letter to Francis Richards (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), David Wright (Cabinet Office) and Ian Ellison (Department of Industry).

Yours ever

Nicholas Alexander

John Rhodes, Esq.,
Department of Trade.

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2. 10

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

29 April 1981

Note

Replies are filed on
individual min Ab file.

This time last year I wrote to you on the Prime Minister's instructions to draw her colleagues' attention to the need to ensure that Government business could continue to be discharged efficiently during the summer recess. She expressed the hope that most senior Ministers would be able to take their holiday in August, soon after the House rose, so that it would be possible to return to a regular pattern of business in Cabinet and its main committees early in September. She asked colleagues to plan their recess movements with this in mind, and she stressed that the Parliamentary situation was not one which required Ministers to confine working visits overseas to the recess.

The Prime Minister would now like to remind colleagues that the same considerations apply this year. It will be still more important to ensure that business can be disposed of effectively in September, as she and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be away for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in the first part of October. The Prime Minister's present intention is to hold Cabinet meetings on 10, 17 and 24 September, and she therefore hopes that most Cabinet Ministers can plan to be available in this country on those dates. In the case of those who will need to be abroad in September, the Prime Minister would wish them to ensure that their deputies are available to help maintain the smooth conduct of Government business. I should also be grateful if we here could have early warning of any necessary prolonged absences by Cabinet Ministers in the period from 7 to 25 September.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and the Attorney General and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

C. A. WHITMORE

The Private Secretary.

Lb