

SUBJECT

u. Master Set

u. PM TOURS - Possible visit to USA in Feb 1984.

089

File



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 November 1984

Dear Sir,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISITS TO WASHINGTON

At the conclusion of the Prime Minister's meeting with Under-Secretary Wallis at Chequers yesterday morning, the US Ambassador said that he had some instructions to fulfil about the Prime Minister's visits to the United States. He was conscious that some confusion had entered the discussions about this for which he might be responsible. But he had now once again spoken directly to the President and could say that he and Mrs. Reagan would be extremely pleased if the Prime Minister would visit them at Camp David on 22 December. They had blocked out 1000-1200 for talks followed by lunch, with the meeting concluding at 1330. It had originally been the intention to make this an alternative to a visit by the Prime Minister in February. But he was now authorised to say that a December visit would not impact on the visit which the Prime Minister had proposed for 18-25 February. The President thought it very important that the Prime Minister should be among the first people he saw after his re-election. A meeting at Camp David would provide a relaxed setting at which both of them could share their views on priorities before the President set plans for his new Administration.

The Prime Minister said that she was immensely grateful for the invitation which she accepted with pleasure. She would like to see the President as soon as possible. The Prime Minister confirmed that she would reflect further on a visit in February. In principle she would like to stick to that. On the other hand, if the President was coming to Europe for the Economic Summit, perhaps they could meet then and she could postpone her visit to the United States until September. Since this would be during the Recess, she would have more time to see the United States outside Washington. She hoped to visit Texas and California. She would like to think further about this and would be in touch. But Ambassador Price could tell the President that she would be delighted to come on 22 December. Ambassador Price undertook to do this and to make clear that a final decision on February was still open.

/ I warned

I warned Ambassador Price shortly after the meeting that we would have to look at timings. I thought it was highly unlikely that the Prime Minister could get to Washington as early as 1000 on 22 December given her commitments in Peking and Hong Kong. I would look into this as quickly as possible. Meanwhile he should be cautious in his report to Washington, making it clear that the Prime Minister had accepted the President's invitation for a visit on her way back from the Far East, but not committing herself on precise timings. I have also spoken in the same sense to John Kerr in Washington.

What we now need urgently is some alternative for getting the Prime Minister from Hong Kong to Washington. While obviously it would be desirable to get the Prime Minister to Washington by 0930 on 22 December, I rather doubt that it is possible and we may have to ask the Americans to consider a meeting later on 22 December or even early on 23 December.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Before dealing with the specific points in it, we need to consider timings. As you will be aware from my correspondence, the Prime Minister has agreed to visit Washington to meet President Reagan on her way back from Peking to Hong Kong. I have asked you to look urgently into the possibility of at the least this is bound to have implications for the programme in Hong Kong, in particular the idea of holding a press conference on 22 December.

Yes, surely
Charles Powell

Charles Powell

Pending a decision on that, the Prime Minister is in general contact with the proposals in your letter for Peking. Given how much has to be crammed into a short time, the two speeches in Peking must both be kept short. We must also leave plenty of time for preparation of them. It would be helpful to have drafts up later than 30 December.

In regard to Hong Kong, so much depends on the time available that it is not possible to reach a considered view on the programme there until we know what time the Prime Minister has

Len Appleyard, Esq.,
 Foreign and Commonwealth Office.