

SECRET

DED:IP

FM WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 492

OF 261700Z FEBRUARY 88

STRICTLY PERSONAL FOR POWELL (NO 10) AND GALSWORTHY

POSSIBLE VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES BY THE PRIME MINISTER

1 I HAVE BEEN THINKING SINCE MY RETURN FROM LONDON ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OF THE PRIME MINISTER MAKING A VISIT TO WASHINGTON BEFORE THE US/SOVIET SUMMIT IN MOSCOW. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL IF I SENT YOU SOME VERY PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT MEET AT THE NATO SUMMIT.

2 A VISIT MAY NOT BE ESSENTIAL. I THINK THAT THERE IS LESS RISK NOW, WITH THE CARLUCCI/SHULTZ/POWELL TRIUMVIRATE FIRMLY IN THE DRIVING SEAT, THAN ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, OF THE PRESIDENT TAKING AN UNPREDICTABLE AND UNWELCOME LINE ON ARMS CONTROL ISSUES WITH THE RUSSIANS. IN THIS SENSE THERE WILL PROBABLY BE LESS NEED TO ENSURE A PERSONAL CONTACT BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT BEFORE THE SUMMIT. MESSAGES MIGHT WELL SUFFICE. BUT IF THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD NEVERTHELESS LIKE TO COME, I SEE NO GREAT PROBLEM ALTHOUGH THE LIKELY PRESS REACTIONS WILL NEED CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. I THINK IT IMPORTANT TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION OF A VISIT DESIGNED TO PUT THE PRESIDENT ON THE RIGHT LINES AGAIN, AND THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD ME THAT SHE WOULD WANT TO AVOID THAT. THIS WOULD ARGUE AGAINST A CAMP DAVID STYLE MEETING WHICH WOULD INVITE COMPARISONS WITH 1984 (SDI) AND 1986 (POST-REYKJAVIK). A WORKING VISIT INCLUDING DISCUSSION WITH OTHER LEADING PLAYERS HERE, WHILE AVOIDING POSSIBLE ELECTION CAMPAIGN PROBLEMS, WOULD HELP TO DISPEL ANY SUCH IMPRESSION. AND SECONDLY, FOR THE SAME REASONS, THE PRIME MINISTER MIGHT LIKE TO COMBINE IT WITH SOME OTHER PUBLIC EVENT SUCH AS A SPEECH OR RECEIVING AN AWARD EITHER IN OR SOMEWHERE NEAR WASHINGTON. WE COULD PUT FORWARD IDEAS IF YOU THOUGHT THIS ATTRACTIVE.

3 WE WILL OF COURSE AIM TO MONITOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE START AND OTHER ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS VERY CAREFULLY, AND WILL WARN YOU AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY IF WE SEE A NEED FOR CONSULTATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

ACLAND

NO DIST.
MR GALSWORTHY

ADD:
MR POWELL, NO 10

YYYY

Secret

Discussed in A/Plen.
Told Sir A asked the
visit almost certainly
not necessary.

can
3073

Secret