

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

The attached letter raises the question of a possible visit to the United States in the second half of the year. You were of course already thinking of this.

The letter points out that the Americans may be thinking of another pre-summit meeting on the lines of last year's session in New York. In my view this would be no substitute for a proper bilateral. I know privately that Kohl is going for a full bilateral in October.

In my view, the best time for visit - assuming a Summit is in December - would be after the Congressional elections in November and before the European Council in December.

Agree in principle?

C.D.P.

Charles Powell
2 July 1986

Yes mt

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CCPC
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 July 1986

Dear Charles,

Visit to the United States

You may wish to know that the US Embassy have recently asked (we think on a personal initiative) whether the Prime Minister had it in mind to visit the USA during our Presidency of the EC. They indicated that if so they thought such a visit would be welcome in Washington.

Sir Oliver Wright supports this idea. The Prime Minister's last extended visit to the USA was in February 1985. (She visited in 1981, but before we held the Presidency that year.) A visit would not, of course, be timely from the American viewpoint before the mid-term elections on 4 November. But after that date there would be no domestic constraints in the US. Moreover, there is a fair chance that there will be a Reagan/Gorbachev summit in the USA in November or shortly after. It would be of value both in substance and for presentational purposes if the Prime Minister were able to go over the ground bilaterally with President Reagan in advance of the summit.

From the FCO's point of view, this is the only specific argument in favour of a Prime Ministerial visit during the UK Presidency. The case for a visit on purely European business is not by itself compelling. If however the Prime Minister were to visit the USA in November, she might well then find it useful to be able to report back to the December European Council, given the current public interest in the state of transatlantic relations, and the possible importance in that context of regional subjects such as South Africa and the Middle East.

The Embassy in Washington believe that the Americans may intend to set up multilateral consultation with allies prior to any further summit meeting, as they did in New York last October. This might well be superficial on substance, and it would not of course have the presentational advantages of a bilateral meeting at the highest level.

The Foreign Secretary is inclined to conclude that this is not a question on which a decision can be taken now. Meanwhile the Prime Minister may like to note that there may later prove to be a strong case for a visit to the USA towards the end of the year. Sir Geoffrey Howe will in any case be going to Washington himself in September, in his Presidential capacity, for talks with Shultz.

Yours ever,
Colin Budd

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(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

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From the Private Secretary

3 July, 1986.

VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

Thank you for your letter of 2 July about the possibility of the Prime Minister visiting Washington in the second half of this year.

The Prime Minister has in fact independently been considering this, and has reached the conclusion that it would in principle be right for her to visit Washington in the period before the next US/Soviet Summit. We cannot take planning very far until we know definitely whether and when the Summit will take place. But I agree that the period between the US Congressional elections on 4 November and the December European Council is the most likely period, with the fortnight 17-30 November being the best from the Prime Minister's point of view. I must put on record now that it would have to be a very short visit - perhaps to Camp David - and the Prime Minister would not want to make any major speech in the course of it. As you will recall, November is already a very heavy month for speeches.

In the light of this, it would suit us better if the Americans were not to arrange the sort of meeting with Heads of Government that they held in New York last year. That in any case depended in good part on the fact that most Heads of Government were in New York anyway for the UN 40th Anniversary. If we can tactfully discourage them from a further such exercise at Head of Government level, that would be helpful.

(C.D. Powell)

C.R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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JB.