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USA

file K6



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 February 1981

VISIT TO BRITAIN BY  
PRESIDENT REAGAN

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 3 February on this subject and has endorsed the advice in its final paragraph.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

CS

F. N. Richards, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Prime Minister

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Whatever we call it, a visit by  
the President of the United States is going  
to be a 'one-off' affair. Perhaps it is best  
therefore to fix the date first & consider afterwards  
just what it should be called & what it should

3 February 1981

contain. Agree?

Dear Michael,

1 hnt. 3/2

Visit to Britain by President Reagan

The considerations which have hitherto dissuaded us from proposing a State Visit for a President of the United States have been:-

- (i) Our post-war experience has been that Presidents will not in fact be drawn into full-dress State Visits. This is not so much a result of lingering Republican sentiment as of the other problems set out below. It is a fact that although President Wilson paid a full State Visit to Britain just after the First World War (including a State Drive; the visit began on Boxing Day) every other President since then has come as the guest of The Sovereign;
- (ii) Security problems; the US Secret Service would be most unlikely to concur in the President taking part eg in the traditional carriage drive from Victoria Station, or, on the second day, from Buckingham Palace to St James's Palace. They would probably insist on his travelling in his own bullet proof car;
- (iii) Logistic problems: Presidents have recently been travelling with an entourage numbering between 200 and 400, a large proportion of whom would insist on being in the same lodging as the President himself. Buckingham Palace could not accommodate this sort of invasion, nor, probably, the communications paraphernalia needed by the President.

As the Prime Minister implies, these problems are not necessarily insurmountable.

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The logistic problems of residence at Buckingham Palace would need looking at, but if the other problems could be sorted out, it might be worth tackling this angle also.

There is, however, one final problem, that of finding the right dates. The Queen's calendar is full and the occasions on which it can be cleared for a State Visit are not many.

Our conclusion therefore has been that the guest of Government formula gave us far greater flexibility, with the possibility of including most, if not all, of the elements that go to make up a State Visit.

Lord Carrington's conclusion therefore is that at this stage we should confine ourselves to inviting the President to visit the United Kingdom, and only at the time when possible dates were considered could we begin to look sensibly at what kind of visit might be most appropriate.

*Yours ever,*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Francis Richards".

(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq  
10 Downing Street

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