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From the Private Secretary

15 February 1998

Dear Dominick,

EVENTS AROUND THE G8

We have now had a chance to consider how to fit in the various visits and Summits that need to take place around the G8, taking account of discussions during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington. The resulting programme is enclosed. Running through this in order:

Chretien Bilateral and EU/Canada Summit

I understand that the opening of Canada House will now take place on the afternoon of Wednesday 13 May, which leaves the way free for us to hold the Chretien bilateral and the EU/Canada Summit the following day. We suggest a bilateral lasting up to an hour, followed by the Summit over a working lunch. Do we also need to allow time for a joint press conference? (We would prefer to avoid this, if at all possible, given all the other pressures on the Prime Minister's time and the fact that the substance of these meetings is likely to be limited.)

Lillian Thomsen of the Canadian High Commission called about this last week. I explained what we were planning, making clear that we had yet to discuss this in any detail with the Commission. She said that they had been hoping the Prime Minister would give a dinner for Chretien on either 12 or 13 May and for a joint press conference, citing the fact that his was an official visit. I explained the difficulties and said that we had no set formula for official visits.

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Other Bilaterals

We are working on the assumption that Hashimoto will be the priority for a substantial bilateral immediately before the G8, given that the Prime Minister will be seeing Clinton, Chretien and Yeltsin separately and will recently have seen other EU Heads.

Visit to Northern Ireland

It would be better not to hold one of the EU Summits immediately after the G8. This would risk the Prime Minister having to give two press conferences in one day and would also increase the probability that one of the Foreign Ministers (Primakov or Albright) will hang around in Birmingham during the Summit proper. We therefore propose to use this time for a possible joint visit to Northern Ireland by the Prime Minister and Clinton. If political developments ruled this out, they would go straight to Chequers and spend the afternoon privately.

Chequers III

We are still considering format, participation and location for this event, but plan to hold it on the morning of 18 May.

EU/US Summit

We are keen to include Parliamentarians in the programme and possibly also businessmen (your letter to me of 2 January). The Summit might therefore start with an informal lunch to which they would be invited.

EU/Russia Summit

We would be happy to squeeze this into two and a half hours (including any press conference) on the morning of 19 May, if that is as long as Yeltsin can manage. The Prime Minister will, in any case, be unable to offer lunch as he will have to make a statement on the G8 that afternoon. Unfortunately, there will also be no time for a bilateral element unless the time for the Summit can be reduced even further.

Please could you now check with the White House whether this schedule would fit with Clinton's plans and confirm with the Russians that Yeltsin will be able to stay on for the EU/Russia Summit on the morning of 19 May.

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I am writing separately about the WTO 50th Anniversary celebrations.

I am copying this letter to Ken Lindsay (Northern Ireland Office), Becky Fox (HM Treasury), John Fiennes (Department of Trade and Industry), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington), Sir Stephen Wall (UKRep Brussels), Sir Andrew Wood (Moscow) and Sir Anthony Goodenough (Ottawa).

Yours ever,

Philip

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