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LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

18 June 1988

See Bob,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA

Thank you for your letter of 17 June dealing with the Prime Minister's stopovers in Malaysia and Bangkok on her way back from Australia.

Stopover in Malaysia

23 I agree that it would probably be wise to wait until after the Ministerial meeting on the Malaysian defence package on 27 June before taking a final decision whether to propose a stopover in Malaysia. But I am sure the Prime Minister would not in any event wish to stay overnight in Kuala Lumpur. Her preference would be to stay just long enough for a meeting with Dr. Mahathir before flying on to Bangkok that evening. However, she would be prepared to arrive in Bangkok rather later than planned, and to have the Thai Government Dinner the following night.

Stopover in Bangkok

I have consulted the Prime Minister about the two refugee camps. She is prepared to visit Site B, the more distant of the two, provided there have been no engagements the night before. I would prefer to leave the decision whether to make the visit by helicopter all the way, or to do it by a mix of aeroplane, helicopter and road, to our reconnaissance team. We would then have the Thai Dinner that evening (7 August), with departure for London at 0800 on 8 August.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Powell

R. N. Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO AUSTRALIA

There are two points about your visit to Australia on which I should be grateful for your guidance.

Stopover in Malaysia

You suggested that we should stopover briefly in Malaysia (rather than Singapore again) on the way from Brisbane to Bangkok. The Foreign Office think this an excellent idea provided we have settled the problem over the Malaysian defence package (we must). The question remains whether to make it just a brief two hour technical stop in the hope that you could meet Mr. Mahathir at or near the airport; or whether to have dinner with him which would in practice mean staying overnight and going on to Bangkok early the next morning. You would then carry out your full programme in Bangkok the next day concluding with dinner there in the evening, returning to London one day later than originally planned (getting back on the evening of Monday 8 August). The advantage of this is that it would give you more time with Dr. Mahathir, mirror arrangements made for Singapore and make it look less like a rushed technical stop. Against that, it means yet another night in yet another hotel with quite an early start the next morning.

How do you feel about it?

This is not going to be possible and do not

Visit to Thailand

the next day's programme

You have agreed to visit a refugee camp near the Cambodia border. This is one of the most important and photogenic elements of your programme. The choice lies between two camps: one is about 50 minutes away by helicopter but is less impressive and less politically significant: the other is 90 minutes by helicopter (or about the same by a mixture of aircraft/helicopter/road) but more impressive and run by a more significant Cambodian opposition group. The strong political advice is that you should go to the more distant

camp, but it does mean a round journey of 3-4 hours, coming towards the end of what will already have been a long and arduous programme. Before committing you to this I would be grateful to know whether you are prepared to undertake the longer journey? There would of course be plenty of time on your return to Bangkok for hairdresser/changing before dinner.

Will go to the distance
not

e.g.?

C. D. POWELL

17 June 1988

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cc PC
✓ D/C



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 June 1988

Dear Charles

Prime Minister's Visit to Australia

File with PAB
Your letter of 13 June asked for early advice on a possible brief stop-over by the Prime Minister in Malaysia. I also deal with the outstanding questions on the stop-overs in Singapore and Bangkok raised in your letter of 3 June.

Stop-Over in Malaysia

In the general context of our relations with Malaysia, a Prime Ministerial visit, however brief, could be very valuable. The political climate was greatly improved by the Prime Minister's visit in 1985, by Dr Mahathir's return visit last year, and, most recently, by the Secretary of State's visit. The Malaysians place special store by personal contacts at the top: perhaps the best example is Mrs Thatcher's call on Dr Mahathir at his hotel last summer. A visit would also help to reassure Dr Mahathir about our overall relationship after the recent Newsnight programme. Lastly, it is not to be excluded that the Malaysians could take umbrage, at a time when we have several important irons in the fire, if the Prime Minister visited Singapore and Thailand but not Malaysia.

The general political case is therefore strong. However, we are far from being out of the wood over the defence package and it is not easy to foresee what the position will be in August. That will depend on what we are able to say between now and then on the questions of ATP and flight frequencies and on progress over the draft MOU. We clearly cannot wait until the last minute before proposing that the Prime Minister should stop over in Malaysia. But the Foreign Secretary thinks that it would be prudent to delay doing so at least until after the Ministerial meeting on the defence package, now planned for the week beginning 27 June.

We have also considered the programme implications. If the Prime Minister stayed in Kuala Lumpur for just two hours, we could simply substitute the technical stop-over for that currently planned for Singapore. She could still arrive in Bangkok by 1820, and have talks followed by dinner at 1900, as planned. However, the visit to Malaysia

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would go down better if the Prime Minister were able to stay on for dinner. A better plan might be for the Prime Minister to do that and depart for Bangkok early the following morning. Departure from Kuala Lumpur at 0900 local time on 7 August should permit arrival in Bangkok at 1000 local time, thus involving a minimum of change to the planned programme in Thailand. The official dinner in Bangkok would then be re-scheduled for 7 August, with departure for London at 0800 local time on 8 August, allowing arrival in the UK at 1915 local time the same day.

Finally the two points raised in your letter of 3 June. On Singapore (the idea of a single photogenic engagement), we await a reply from the post. On the programme in Thailand, the Embassy advise that the helicopter journey time to Site 2 is about 50 minutes, compared with 90 minutes to Site B. The helicopter would be a military twin-engined, eleven-seater Bell 214ST with a VIP qualified crew. An alternative route to Site B would be by aeroplane to Surin, followed by a short helicopter flight and finishing the journey by road. Total journey time would be about the same as by helicopter all the way (ie about 4 hours there and back), but this method might be more comfortable and less tiring.

The Ambassador is strongly of the view that a visit to Site B would be preferable. It would be a demonstration of support for Sihanouk in his efforts to seek a solution in Cambodia and would be welcomed as such by the Thai Government. It would attract considerable media attention. There would be no time or opportunity for substantive exchanges at Site B but these can be pursued with Sihanouk in London later in the year. A meeting with Sihanouk elsewhere in Thailand, assuming it could be arranged, would not have the same impact. Nor would a visit to Site 2, though it would highlight our humanitarian concern for the plight of the Cambodian refugees (the KPNLF is divided and incapable of political initiative at present). There is little doubt that the Thais would prefer a visit to Site B.

We agree with the Ambassador that, if at all possible, we should go for a visit to Site B rather than Site 2.

The Embassy are consulting the Thais about speeches at the official dinner. We await a response.

Yours aw

R N Peirce

(R N Peirce)
Private Secretary

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Australia Jan 88

