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From the Private Secretary

21 October 1987

POSSIBLE NATO SUMMIT

Thank you for your letter of 20 October reporting President Reagan's reluctance to travel to Europe for a NATO Summit before his projected meeting with Mr. Gorbachev this autumn. This was discussed by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary this evening.

The Prime Minister said that we had no alternative but to accept that there would be no summit at Head of Government level before the US/Soviet meeting. She did not see any point in a summit in the immediate aftermath of the President's meeting with Mr. Gorbachev since this would just look as though the Alliance was required to act as a rubber stamp. There might be something to be said for a summit in the first half of next year to take stock of where NATO stood in the final months of President Reagan's term of office. But no decision was needed on that yet.

Although the point was not specifically discussed, I am sure the Prime Minister will want to send President Reagan a message before his meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. I should be grateful for a draft in due course.

I am copying this letter to John Howe in the Ministry of Defence.

(CHARLES POWELL)

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.