

From: Michael Foot MP

Prime Minister



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

11 March 1982

We will arrange the meeting with colleagues to come for the decision this.

Please send to Lord C. V.P.J.H. M.H.

M.H. 11/2

Dear Prime Minister,

I have now had a chance to discuss with my colleagues your proposal that President Reagan should be invited to make major speech before members of both Houses of Parliament in Westminster Hall.

I must say first, that the embarrassment which this proposal, made without consultation, has caused to the American Administration is the fault of the Government and to continue to lay the blame at the door of the American Administration is quite unjustified.

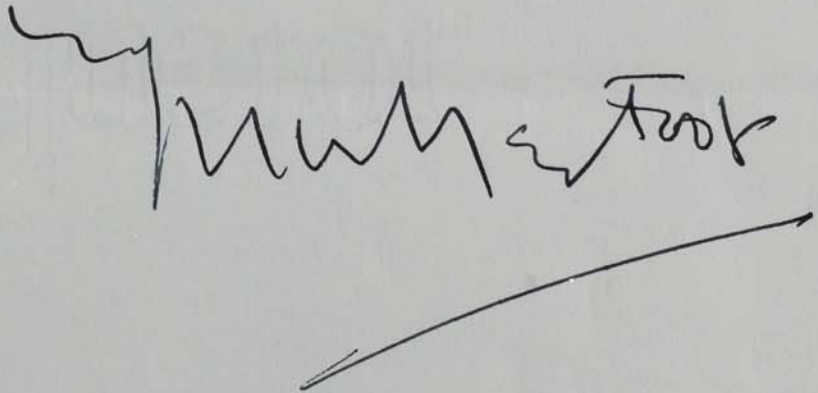
It is our view that an address in Westminster Hall to both Houses of Parliament is a special parliamentary occasion and should be offered to foreign statesmen only with the agreement of the major parties and the authorities of both Houses. It is not something solely in the gift of the Government of the day.

Had we been consulted in advance about the possibility of this honour being offered to President Reagan, we would have been able to give our advice without any embarrassment to anybody. We would have been able to give the reasons why we believe such an arrangements would not be appropriate.

I believe that to proceed with your present proposal will inevitably arouse hostility in many quarters which will cause unnecessary embarrassment to all concerned.

We still hold those views. However, the error having been made, we suggest the best way to ease the situation is that the Government should arrange to hold the meeting in the Royal Gallery, in accordance with the other precedents cited in your letter.

I regret that this is not the answer which you and the Foreign Secretary have asked us to make but I must emphasise that any embarrassment it may cause has been created solely by the Government's failure to conduct proper consultations before the offer was made.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Thatcher". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized hand. Below the signature is a long, thin, slightly curved line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP