



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

15 March 1982

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S VISIT

The Prime Minister raised the question of the invitation to President Reagan to address Members of both Houses of Parliament while the Home Secretary, Lord President, Paymaster General and Chief Whip were here this morning. She said that there was to be a meeting on Thursday of this week on the matter, but that she would like a preliminary word now about the letters which Mr. Foot and Mr. Steel had sent her about the invitation to the President.

In discussion it was pointed out that the only time a Conservative government had invited a foreign leader - President de Gaulle - to address Members of both Houses, he had spoken in Westminster Hall. All the other foreign statesmen who had given such addresses since the war had done so at the invitation of Labour governments and had spoken in the Royal Gallery. On every one of those occasions the Conservative Party had supported the invitation. But now the Labour Party were not co-operating with what the Government wanted to do. They were virtually saying that if President Reagan did not give his address in the Royal Gallery, the Labour Party would boycott the occasion. There was a good deal of public support for the view that the Government should not give in to the Labour and Liberal Parties on this issue. Their position that they would come to hear President Reagan if he spoke in the Royal Gallery but not if the ceremony was held in Westminster Hall was a weak one, and it would be easy to expose how small-minded they were being.

On the other hand, it was argued that while the approach of the Labour and Liberal Parties to this matter was wholly to be deplored, it was a question of judging where the balance of advantage among a number of conflicting considerations lay. We could not ignore the fact that it would give more offence to President Reagan and to the British public if we insisted on holding the ceremony in Westminster Hall and there was trouble as a result than if it was decided now that the President should give his address in the Royal Gallery. The Government could well adopt the position that they believed that Westminster Hall was the right place for an occasion of this kind but that it was above all a Parliamentary occasion and there must therefore be

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no question of a guest of Parliament being put in an invidious position. These considerations left the Government, in the light of Labour and Liberal reactions, with no alternative but to arrange the ceremony in the Royal Gallery, much though they regretted it. This would probably be the way to cause least embarrassment to President Reagan.

It was also pointed out that there were a number of Government supporters who believed that the Royal Gallery was the right place for President Reagan to give his address. Moreover, it would be easier to fill the Royal Gallery than Westminster Hall, especially if the House of Commons was in Recess at the time of President Reagan's visit. Against that, there was no doubt that the ceremony could be made much more impressive if it were held in Westminster Hall.

The Prime Minister said that they would resume their discussion on Thursday when the Lord Chancellor, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, and Leader of the House of Lords would also be present.

I am sending copies of this letter to Michael Collon (Lord Chancellor's Office), Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office), Michael Pownall (Office of the Leader of the House of Lords), Keith Long (Paymaster General's Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

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John Halliday, Esq.,
Home Office.

Reagan

ADDRESSES TO PARLIAMENT

1939	Le Brun (France)	Westminster Hall
1942	Smuts (South Africa)	Royal Gallery
1944	McKenzie King	Royal Gallery
1960	De Gaulle	Westminster Hall
1966	U Thant [<u>UN</u>]	Royal Gallery
1967	Kosygin	" "
1969	Saragat (Italy)	" "
1970	Brandt	" "
1976	Giscard	" "
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1976	[<u>Speaker of US House of Representatives</u>]	?

American Presidents

1919	Woodrow Wilson	State Visit
1959	Eisenhower	Guest of Government
1961	Kennedy	"
1969	Nixon	"
1970	Nixon	"
1977	Carter	"

Reagan - a sharp & good
friend of Britain
and a staunch defender of the
free world.