

PRIME MINISTER

President Reagan's Address to Members of both Houses.

The Speaker, will, no doubt, have told you what he has in mind for his Statement on the issue. But this morning's Cabinet discussion did not touch upon the question of in whose gift the use of Westminster Hall and/or the Royal Gallery rests.

The Royal Gallery is of course a Lords matter. The Government would presumably have no difficulty in getting the House Authorities to issue an invitation. There is no sign of formal Opposition resistance.

Westminster Hall appears to be a joint responsibility of Lords and Commons. For the Commons, the Speaker would presumably have to give his authority for an invitation to be issued in respect of Westminster Hall. If the Opposition were to maintain formal objections to this, it could be very difficult indeed for the Speaker to agree to the event.

11 March 1982

Copy to:

Mr Whitmore  
Mr Coles

CC(82)10<sup>th</sup>

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Item 2.

V...t of  
President Reagan

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Leader of the Opposition had protested publicly about what he regarded as the failure of the Government to consult the Opposition on the suggestion that President Reagan might be invited to address Members of both Houses of Parliament in Westminster Hall during his visit to the United Kingdom in June. It was unthinkable that the Head of State of our major ally, and the effective head of the Atlantic Alliance, should pay an official visit to this country, as the guest of The Queen, without being invited to address Members of both Houses. The obvious venue for such an address was Westminster Hall, which was part of the common heritage of the United Kingdom and the United States. All that had happened so far was that a United States official had been shown the Hall by the Serjeant at Arms and Black Rod.

She had made it clear to Mr Foot that in her view earlier formal consultation with the Opposition parties would have been premature. The Shadow Cabinet had discussed the matter the previous evening, but in an earlier discussion that she had had with Mr Foot, it had appeared that the Opposition's objections to the proposal were threefold. They regarded Mr Reagan as a highly controversial figure; but that had also been true of Mr Kosygin. They argued that he had only been in office for a relatively short time: he had, however, been Head of State for longer than had General De Gaulle when he spoke in Westminster Hall in 1960. Finally, the Opposition attached great importance to their view that any address should be given in the Royal Gallery (as for all other Heads of State or Government since the war except General De Gaulle) rather than in Westminster Hall. This was a trivial and small-minded objection. Although the United States Government appear to take a relaxed view of the venue, it would be hard to justify according the President a lesser privilege than General De Gaulle; and it would be unfortunate if the Royal Gallery were used and Mr Foot then chose to represent this as a capitulation to pressure from the Opposition. The choice seemed to be to hold a joint meeting in Westminster Hall, in the probable absence of many members of the Labour Party, or to hold it in the Royal Gallery with greater all-Party participation. She was strongly inclined towards the former option, subject to the view of the Cabinet, but she would take a final decision in consultation with colleagues most closely concerned after she had seen Mr Foot again later that day.

The Cabinet -

2. Agreed that, subject to the outcome of the Prime Minister's further discussion with Mr Foot, and to consultations with other parties concerned, President Reagan should be formally invited to address Members of both Houses of Parliament during his visit to the United Kingdom in June.