

10 March 1982

President Reagan's Visit

You had every reason to be annoyed by yesterday's announcement by the Americans that President Reagan has accepted an invitation to address a 'joint session of the British Parliament' during his forthcoming visit in June. I am very sorry that this should have happened before we had been able to approach you formally about our proposals for the visit. The American Ambassador has apologised for the lapse, which occurred in Washington; I can only add my own apologies for what I assure you was an unforeseen and entirely unintended discourtesy.

Details of the President's programme are still to be made final. We await a formal response from the Americans, after which the programme will be cleared with all concerned and submitted for The Queen's approval. But the Americans have already indicated that the President is particularly strongly attracted by the idea that he should address members of both Houses of Parliament in Westminster Hall. This is an honour of which the President fully understands the significance, and I hope that despite this false start it will still prove possible for the House to agree to invite him. If it is convenient, the ceremony would be planned to take place at midday on 8 June. I have written to the Lord Great Chamberlain asking him to seek Her Majesty's approval for the use of Westminster Hall for this ceremony. I have also made a separate approach to the Lord Chancellor.

/You may

The Rt Hon George Thomas MP



You may recall that a ceremony of this kind was arranged at Westminster Hall in April 1960 during the State Visit of President de Gaulle. Although of course several other leaders have since addressed members of both Houses from the Royal Gallery, we believe that it would be right for the arrangements to follow this precedent. Meetings will be called in due course to plan and execute the detail of the ceremony, to which you will of course be invited to send representatives.

(CARRINGTON)