PRIME MINISTER

mb

250th ANNIVERSARY OF NO 10

As you know, Walpole took up residence at No 10 as Prime Minister in 1735. So next year is the 250th anniversary of its becoming the Prime Minister's residence.

I have been considering what, if anything, we should do to celebrate this milestone. All that is planned so far is a first-day cover and postmark, a piece of private enterprise by a Mr Bradbury who is approved and used by the Post Office for these things.

We could give a party for former Prime Ministers and people who have been closely associated with No 10. But I doubt whether this would appeal much to those concerned or strike any chord with the public. We cannot these days have an 'open day' for members of the public. But the ideal thing would be to show the public generally something of the house which they provide for their Prime Minister and of its history.

That suggests a television programme. Two years ago you did something of this kind with Laurens van der Post for Yorkshire Television. But I was thinking of something which concentrated more on some of the historical associations of No 10 and how it is used today - the Cabinet Room and some of the things that have happened there; the plaques in the Garden Rooms about their use in the Second World War; perhaps the room in No 12 where Wellington and Nelson are said to have met; and so on.

Nothing which reveals the geography of No 10 is welcome from a security point of view; and the filming would have to be carefully controlled. But it should be possible to show rooms without revealing their relationship to each other, as was done in the Laurens van der Post interview, and without showing more than has already been published, for example in the book about No 10.

Mr Ingham and I envisaged that the team which did this year's programmes on The Palace of Westminster would do this sort of thing very well. Provided that the DOE have no objection, would you be content for us to float the idea with the BBC?

Yes

F.E.R.B.

F E R BUTLER

17 December 1984

947-1926 Appointments

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

Bernard Ingham – to see
Could you arrange for you and me to float this with the BBC on the lines we discussed.

7 January 1985

Dear Robin

FERB 8.1.

Thank you for your letter of 24 December about the proposal for a television programme to mark the 250th Anniversary of Walpole's taking up residence at 10 Downing Street.

There are certainly no objections to this from our point of view and we shall be pleased to co-operate in whatever way we can.

I should be grateful if your people could keep PSA in touch with progress to that they can arrange for the BBC to sign the standard indemnity for any damage or loss to the building that may occur during filming. The contact is Mr Holland, Room 10/14, St Christopher House, Southwark Street, London SE1 (Ext 2145). It would be helpful if our District Works Officer could also be kept informed so that he can assist the BBC with any arrangements they may need to make for electrical supplies and so on.

Yours sincerely

John Ballard

J F BALLARD
Private Secretary

Robin Butler Esq

PM Security meeting minutes 7.1.85

6. 250th Anniversary of No. 10

There was no difficulty in principle with a programme which showed no more of the interior of No 10 than the programme with Laurens van der Post. Mr. Butler had written to the PSA to establish their views, before taking the proposal further.

FILE

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

24 December 1984

Dear John,

As you will know, 1985 is the 250th Anniversary of Walpole's taking up residence in No.10. We have been considering whether there is anything which we could do to mark this anniversary. We have approved a First Day Cover and Postmark proposed by a Mr. Bradbury who is approved and used by the Post Office for these things.

It would be nice also to show the public generally something of the house, its history and its present use. We cannot these days have an "open day" but the next best thing would be a television programme, perhaps on the lines of "The Palace of Westminster" last year. For security purposes, the filming would have to be carefully controlled and we would have to try to ensure that such a programme did not convey more than is already known of the geography of the house and the relationship of the various rooms to each other; but it should be possible to do this. As you will recall the Prime Minister gave an interview to Laurens van der Post a year or so ago in which she showed him round parts of the house.

The Prime Minister is happy in principle with this idea. Could you let me know whether your Secretary of State and your Department would see any objection from the DOE's point of view. If you are content, we will float the idea with the BBC, and they may well want to seek the co-operation of some of your people, and in particular Mr. John Charlton, who wrote the book on No.10.

I am copying this letter to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Butler

John Ballard, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

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