

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

3 February 1986

*Prime Minister
Agree that President
von Weizsacker be
invited to address a
Joint Session? (The King of Spain
Dear Charles, will have done so in April).*

State Visit by President von Weizsacker:

1-4 July 1986

The Foreign Secretary wishes to recommend strongly that President von Weizsacker be invited to address a Joint Session of both Houses of Parliament during his State Visit.

The exceptional distinction of such an address has been accorded in recent years to President Saragat, Willi Brandt (then Federal German Chancellor), President Reagan and President Mitterrand. King Juan Carlos, who like von Weizsacker is a non-executive Head of State, will, as you know, be similarly honoured this April.

The importance of the visit and its value for our relationship with one of our closest allies and Community partners need no emphasis. An address to Parliament would help make it the historic occasion both countries wish and would bring it to the public eye in a way few other events could. It is appropriate that von Weizsacker should be accorded the same privilege as President Mitterrand and King Juan Carlos and it would be seen unfavourably in Germany if he were not.

As one of the most distinguished German Parliamentarians von Weizsacker would carry the occasion well. He has impeccable English and is an accomplished speaker. It would be a particularly appropriate recognition of his long-standing association with and affection for Britain since the time of his studies at Oxford. I enclose a personality note.

If the Prime Minister is content, we shall set in train consultations with those concerned in the Palace and in Parliament.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)

Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

VON WEIZSÄCKER, DR RICHARD

Federal President.

Born 1920 in Stuttgart, the son of a career diplomat, Ernest von Weizsäcker, (who though not a Nazi was State Secretary at the Wilhelmstrasse 1938-43 and was sentenced by a US tribunal in 1949 for complicity in war crimes). His brother Carl Friedrich is an eminent physicist and philosopher. His grandfather was a close adviser to the Kaiser and once considered a possible successor to Bismarck.

After a period at Oxford in the family of a Balliol don, he was called up in 1938 and served with the infantry on the eastern front. Came within sight of Moscow in 1941. In 1945 he was among the troops cut off in East Prussia and evacuated to Denmark. When the surrender came he demobbed himself and went home.

Studied law at Grenoble and Göttingen, and helped to defend his father. Entered industry. Became a member of the board of Boehringer and Co at Ingelheim. President of the German Evangelical Church Conference 1964-70 and again 1979-81. Member of the Bundestag from 1969-81, and a Vice Chairman of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Party, 1972-79. Nominated to oppose Scheel in the Presidential election of 1974 and did far better than expected against an unbeatable candidate. Author of the party's programme of basic principles, agreed at the 1978 party conference. A Vice President of the Bundestag 1979-81. In the Bundestag he managed to stand above party political infighting. He came to epitomise the liberal socially conscious element in the CDU and clearly saw himself as a conservative with a duty to conciliate and integrate diverging elements of society.

Imported by the Berlin CDU, somewhat at the last moment, to lead the party into the 1979 Berlin elections, he failed to defeat the SPD/FDP coalition, but achieved a record vote for the CDU. When Stobbe fell in January 1981, Weizsäcker forced the other parties to agree to a dissolution. In the subsequent elections the CDU just failed to obtain an absolute majority. Weizsäcker owed his election as Governing Mayor in June 1981 to support from break away members of the FDP Parliamentary Party. Elected Deputy Chairman of the Federal CDU in May 1983: he resigned the post on becoming Federal President.

In Berlin he proved an outstanding success. He took over at a time of considerable disillusionment with the City's political establishment. He came to grips with the problems of the City, showing a depth of vision, wisdom and good sense. His successes were such that only he seemed able to guarantee a further CDU victory in the 1985 Berlin elections. So it was only after some delay and with reluctance that the Chancellor nominated him for the Federal Presidency. But he never had a real alternative. Opinion polls showed von Weizsäcker to be the clear popular favourite. Germans of all parties see him as someone who can integrate and conciliate, who stands above narrow party political interest. He was elected to the Federal Presidency in June 1984 when Carstens's period of office came to an end.

Despite a touch of vanity, von Weizsäcker exudes wisdom and good sense, and is an excellent speaker. An intellectual and philosopher with a conversational style to match, he is liberal in his views on both domestic policy and Ostpolitik, and plays an influential and beneficial national role on the side of moderation in his party. He openly admitted to a wish to make the Presidency a more political office. A number of speeches — including one criticising SDI — in his first year indicate that he intends to stick to this resolution. An old friend of Britain, who has given much time to the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft and the Konigswinter conference.

Married with four children. He speaks excellent, and his wife adequate, English. Although born a Freiherr (Baron) he prefers not to use his title.