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CJP

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

6 November, 1984

Prime Minister
 Content with general
 line of what Sir G.
 Howe proposes?

Dear Charles, CDP
 6/xi

Yes - Our general
 theme is held
 every year at the Cenotaph.

Commemoration of the End of the Second World War ms

In your letter of 2 October about the 1985 celebration of VE Day you said the Prime Minister would like considered recommendations in due course. We are looking at this carefully together with our French, German and American allies. This letter takes account of their present thinking but is only a very preliminary response.

The essence of the problem is how to manage our participation in events staged by Others (we do not at present envisage any official British events) so that we respect the achievements and sacrifices of those who won the War against Fascism, including our former Eastern allies (Poland, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) without giving offence to the Germans, and for that matter the Italians and Japanese. Our objective must be to shift the emphasis in the direction of reconciliation and looking towards the future. It is already clear that the Soviet authorities for their part will exploit the anniversaries as an occasion for anti-Western and particularly anti-German propaganda, perhaps as much for internal reasons as for any effect they may hope to have in the West. They will accuse the FRG - and also Japan - of continued "revanchism" and aggressive intent, pointing to the Kohl Government's higher profile on the issue of German reunification as well as the recent INF deployments in the Federal Republic. Gromyko spoke extensively on these lines during his recent meetings with Western leaders in America.

The issues facing us in 1985 may thus be summed up as:

- how to combat Soviet 'revanchist' propaganda (including Soviet distortion of the roles of the Powers in winning the last war);
- how to associate the FRG with Allied commemorations and make clear our support for Germany's (and Italy's and Japan's) present-day course;
- how to respond to the Russians' expected invitation to their own Commemoration Parade in Moscow on 9 May;



- whether to hold a British national celebration and whom to involve;

? 1985 It may be helpful to look first at a list of the main wartime anniversaries in 1984 with, in the right-hand column, a list of other events in 1985 which provide openings or challenges for a coordinated Western strategy:

1985

Main 40th

Anniversaries

Yalta 12 February 1945

VE Day 8 May 1945

Potsdam 2 August 1945
VJ Day 2 September 1945

Relevant Events

Sir Geoffrey Howe's visits to Romania and Bulgaria 9-13 February

Hungarian Foreign Minister to UK from 5-7 March

Sir Geoffrey Howe's visits to Poland, CSSR, GDR 8-13 April

Bonn Economic Summit in early May

Moscow commemorating ceremonies on 8 and 9 May: probably similar ceremonies in other East bloc capitals too

30th Anniversary of Warsaw Pact on 14 May

Gromyko's visit to UK in late May

NATO Ministerial Meeting 6-7 June

10th Anniversary of Helsinki Final Act in late July/early August

UN Charter (40th Anniversary on 24 October 1985 but date of any special celebration not fixed)



Sir Geoffrey's provisional recommendations are as follows:

I The proposed 10th Anniversary of the CSCE Final Act is perhaps the best occasion for a commemoration of the end of World War II. Although it is not due to take place in Helsinki until August 1985, it will bring together all the combatants on both sides in Europe, as well as the USA, Canada and a number of neutrals. The Russians must be expected by then to have done a good deal of banging on the "revanchist" drum, but the atmosphere of the CSCE meeting should limit their ability to go on doing so. In addition, we should use the Bonn Economic Summit, which is likely to be held just before the 9 May commemoration in Moscow, as a timely occasion for setting the tone on the Western side. This would have the merit of bringing in the Japanese as well. The seven heads of State and government might issue a statement recalling the sacrifices made, the need for reconciliation, the need to settle disputes by peaceful means, and meet the challenges of the future by cooperation. These thoughts could then reappear in the NATO Ministerial communique in early June, rather in the same way as the Summit communique from Versailles was reflected in the Bonn Summit communique in June 1982. There is evidence that the Germans are already thinking on these lines. All this would prepare the way for the wider CSCE meeting in August.

II We should coordinate carefully with our allies - especially the Germans, bearing in mind their sensitivities and their criticism of the 40th anniversary of the D Day landings - about attendance at any Soviet functions. We will need to act in step with the Americans and the French. So far we know no more of what the Russians have in mind than was contained in the June resolution of the CPSU central committee which announced a 'festival of the whole people'. The main event is likely to be a 'solemn meeting of representatives of the working people of Moscow and the servicemen of the Moscow garrison' on 8 May, and a wreath laying on 9 May. The Russians have not yet made clear whether they intend to invite foreign representatives (diplomatic or from abroad), but the 1975 precedent would suggest that they will. On that occasion we sent a non-governmental delegation, mainly of those who had been involved with the Russians in the War, led by Lord Mountbatten.

III As of now it is not clear what the British Legion intend to organise, but we understand that the MOD are not planning any specifically British celebration of VE day. If there were to be a ceremony organised independently, the Government would no doubt wish to be associated with it. An added advantage would be that we could arrange for the



Soviet Ambassador to be invited. But it is not generally our practice to celebrate anything but 25th and 50th anniversaries. This year's celebration of D-day was only held when it was because of the fear that many of those attending would not be alive on the 50th anniversary. The French also held a joint reconciliation ceremony with the Germans at Verdun on 22 September; this went well and did much to mollify German sensitivities. But on balance we do not see merit in trying to stage a similar Anglo-German event on the VE Day anniversaries.

Agreed

IV We should take all suitable opportunities throughout the year to set the historical record straight as regards contributions to the victory in 1945; and to defend our German, Italian and Japanese partners from 'revanchist' propaganda.

Sir Geoffrey agrees that we should give thought to the best way of marking the UN 40th anniversary as part of the overall Western effort. But he does not think this should be the West's main platform. It is unlikely that we shall be able to make much use of it as part of the strategy outlined above. Preparations for the 40th Anniversary have already started in New York, where the non-aligned are proposing that there should be a special declaration and a high level commemorative meeting on 24 October (at the 15th and 25th Anniversaries Heads of Government attended). We doubt that these activities, if eventually agreed, will provide much scope for positive initiatives to project the Western position. Like most such events at the UN their shape will be largely dictated by the concerns of the non-aligned and we will need to be on the look-out for Soviet attempts to exploit the events to their own advantage.

Finally, it has been suggested that we should drop the concept of celebrating "VE Day" and refer instead to commemorating the anniversary of the end of the second World War - on the basis that this phrase, although more cumbersome, has the merit of looking forward rather than back. Sir Geoffrey is not yet sure that this perfectly understandable suggestion will not arouse an adverse reaction that could turn out to be counterproductive.

Sir Geoffrey would be grateful to know if the Prime Minister is content for work to proceed on these lines.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram in the Ministry of Defence and to Bryan Cartledge in the Cabinet Office.

*Yours ever,
Colin Budd*

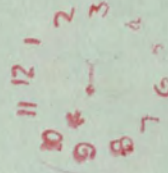
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CONFIDENTIAL

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

DEFENCE
VE Jay
10/84

6 NOV 1984





JWRALH

bcPC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 November 1984

COMMEMORATION OF THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Thank you for your letter of 6 November setting out the Foreign Secretary's preliminary views on the celebration of VE Day in 1985 and the United Kingdom's participation in such events as are organised.

The Prime Minister is content for work to proceed on the lines recommended by the Foreign Secretary. She agrees in particular that we should not try to copy the Franco-German reconciliation ceremony at Verdun.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD) and and to Bryan Cartledge (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. POWELL)

C.R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



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Ref. A084/2325

MR POWELL

NBPM

CDP 12/ki

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Private Secretary sent me a copy of his letter of 6 November about the commemoration of the end of the Second World War.

2. I should have thought that it was a good idea to use the Bonn Economic Summit as a timely occasion for setting the tone on the Western side. The Economic Summit will happen just before the anniversary of VE Day; and at the Summit the main combatants on both sides of the Second World War will be represented. It would surely be possible to think in terms of a declaration which made a good deal of the point that 40 years after the end of the Second World War combatants on both sides are now working closely together for peace and mutual prosperity.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence.

** Other than the Russians*

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

9 November 1984

DEFENCE: Celebration of VE Day

Oct 84



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 October 1984

Celebration of VE Day

Towards the end of the restricted session of the Seminar on NATO strategy, Sir J. Graham raised the question of celebration of the 40th anniversary of VE Day which falls next year. We needed to take account of German sensibilities, particularly after the experience of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Normandy landings. It seemed possible that the French had in mind to do something though he had no details.

In discussion the awkward conjunction of the Economic Summit in Bonn next autumn was noted. One suggestion was that to make a link with the celebration of the United Nations 40th anniversary. But it was pointed out that arrangements for this were well advanced. The Prime Minister took the view that we should encourage the Americans to arrange some celebrations in the United States. This would make it less difficult for the Germans.

The Prime Minister would like to see some considered recommendations on this in due course.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

Charles Powell

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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