



File X16
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

25 April 1985

VE DAY: PRESIDENT REAGAN'S VISIT TO A GERMAN WAR
CEMETERY

Herr Teltschik telephoned this evening from the Federal chancellery in Bonn to express concern about UPI reports of the Prime Minister's alleged criticism in the House of Commons this afternoon of President Reagan's visit to a German war cemetery in Bitburg.

We do not yet have the official Hansard record of the Prime Minister's exchange with Mr. Winnick. I enclose an unofficial record produced from the tapes.

I explained to Mr. Teltschik the nature of Prime Minister's Questions. I said that the Prime Minister had been at pains not to criticise President Reagan but to make clear that the United States' actions were a matter for them alone. She had however expressed personal understanding for the point of view of Mr. Winnick that visits to cemeteries where members of the SS were buried could cause offence to the families of victims of the SS and those who fought them.

You may like to inform the Embassy in Bonn of this and encourage them to take the same line.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

CHARLES POWELL

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Q: DAVID WINNICK

Is it not time that the Rt Honourable Lady came off the fence and said the British Government will be represented in Moscow for the celebrations there of the 40th anniversary of the end of the war. And while she's about it would she tell the US President that for him to visit a cemetery in Germany where SS mass murderers are buried is not only deeply insulting and offensive for the memory of their victims but is no less insulting and offensive to all those who fought in the last war to destroy Nazi tyranny.

A: PRIME MINISTER

I believe that we should probably be represented in Moscow by HM Ambassador in Moscow. With regard to the Hon Gentleman's comments about the German cemetery, I am not responsible for the activities of the United States - I am not responsible for those - but I have considerable sympathy with what the Hon Gentleman has said.